

Pathways to Progress Volume I

Community Development Challenges for San Angelo, Texas
and Surrounding Communities



Community Development Initiatives
Angelo State University
Annual Update 2016
Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
SOCIAL HEALTH INDEX FOR THE CONCHO VALLEY	9
Solving Our Problems Together	10
Quality of Life Figures in Decline	13
Vast Differences in Quality of Life across City.....	19
Looking for Answers	23
Taking a Balanced Approach.....	25
Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back in Measure	28
Community Woes Linger.....	32
Quality of Life.....	35
CHILDREN OF THE CONCHO VALLEY	38
Falling Through the Cracks	40
The Well-Being of Children in Tom Green County	43
Battle against Child Poverty Goes On	46
Child Abuse in our Area	49
It Takes a Village to Raise Kids Right.....	51
Children Are All of Our Future	54
How Are the Children?	57
Local Domestic and Child Abuse Levels Too High	60
Saying NO to Citizen Complacency	62
Teen Births Cost us All.....	67
No Reason for Complacency	70
Disconnected Youth.....	73
SENIORS OF THE CONCHO VALLEY	76
Truly Grand Parents.....	77
They worked, now it's Up to Us.....	80
City Has High Levels of Elderly Abuse, Accidents	84
Texas Should Get Atop the Coming Demographic Wave	88
Not All Seniors Equal	92
Isolation among the Elderly	95
HEALTH CARE IN THE CONCHO VALLEY	98
Caring About Care	101
Not so well being	103

Pathways to Progress

Giving Thanks, Getting Checked.....	107
Door to Reform	109
West Texas’ Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care	112
Driven to Live a Healthier Lifestyle	115
Ounces of Prevention.....	118
Index Raises Red Flags	121
The Gift of Health.....	124
Getting With the ACA Program	127
Kid’s Health Index Reveals Disparities	130
Standard of Safety	134
Abortion Rate Declining	137
White Midlife Despair	140
Health Status of Poor	143
THE ECONOMY OF THE CONCHO VALLEY	145
Contributions of Immigrants Must Not be ignored.....	147
U.S. Needs to Commit to Paying a Living Wage	150
GI Bill: A Success.....	153
A Community Divided.....	156
Let’s Get Serious About Reducing Poverty.....	160
HOUSEHOLDS OF THE CONCHO VALLEY	162
College Education Crucial, Not Cheap	164
Overcoming San Angelo’s Housing Hurdles.....	168
Avoiding Complacency	171
Area Public Transportation Must Prepare for Future Needs	174
Hunger in the Land of Plenty	177
Seeing a Pattern Here.....	181
Many Struggle to Keep a Roof over Their Heads.....	184
Figures behind Tax Burden.....	188
Solving Social Security.....	193
Grading our Schools	196
INEQUALITY IN THE CONCHO VALLEY	200
Inequality Imperils Us.....	202
Pay Roles	205
Blaming the Poor for Being Poor.....	208

Pathways to Progress

Income Inequality by the Numbers.....	212
Drifting Apart?.....	216
Waking Up From the American Dream.....	220
A Great Revolt?	223
Different Kind of Segregation Occurring	226
CONTRIBUTORS	231

Community Development Initiatives (CDI) at Angelo State University encourages you to reproduce and distribute this material for academic purposes, or use in community projects. Please give appropriate credit to Community Development Initiatives at Angelo State University.

This material is subject to periodic updates. For the most recent information, please visit our website (<http://www.angelo.edu/dept/cdi/>) or contact us at the following

Community Development Initiatives
Angelo State University
San Angelo, Texas 76909
(325) 486-6423

This material is not for reproduction or distribution for any commercial reasons or for any personal monetary gain.

Table of Figures

Figure 1: the San Angelo Social Health Index.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 2: Index of San Angelo Economic & Social Indicators	14
Figure 3: San Angelo Index for Children and Elders	14
Figure 4: Percent Change in Housing Affordability	15
Figure 5: Percent Increase in Average Annual Wage per Job	15
Figure 6: Percent Change in Unemployment Rate	16
Figure 7: Percent Change in Child Abuse Rate	16
Figure 8: Percent Change in Elder and Disabled Abuse Rate	17
Figure 9: Percent Change in Economically Disadvantaged Students	17
Figure 10: Percent Change in Elder Poverty Rate	18
Figure 11: San Angelo Index of Elders-2011	19
Figure 12: Index of Elders Comparison.....	20
Figure 13: San Angelo Social Health Indicators.....	26
Figure 14: San Angelo Social Health Index	28
Figure 15: Percent Change in Infant Mortality Rate.....	29
Figure 16: Percent Change in Divorce Rate	29
Figure 17: Percent Change in Economically Disadvantaged Students	30
Figure 18: Percent Change in the Rate of Family Violence	31
Figure 19: Percentage of Children Eligible for Reduced or Free Lunch	33
Figure 20: High School Completion Rate.....	33
Figure 21: Top Health Needs.....	37
Figure 22: Tom Green County Children's Health Index	43
Figure 23: A Snapshot of Scores for 2011 CSHI.....	44
Figure 24: Children's Social Health Index Results	52
Figure 25: CHSI Neighborhood Comparisons.....	52
Figure 26: Percent Uninsured Children Under Age 18.....	54
Figure 27: Percent Uninsured Children for Concho Valley Counties	55
Figure 28: Serious Neighborhood Disparities Impacting Children	58
Figure 29: Percent Change in Rates of Family Violence & Child Abuse 2000-2013	60
Figure 30: Indicators of the West Texas Violence Index	62
Figure 31: Comparison of Violent Crime Indicators	63
Figure 32: Comparison of Family Violence Indicators	63
Figure 33: Comparison of Child Abuse Indicators	64
Figure 34: Comparison of Suicide Indicators	64
Figure 35: Comparison of Accidental Death Indicators	64
Figure 36: Comparison of Sexual Assault Indicators	65
Figure 37: Local and State Births per 1,000 Females	68
Figure 38: Demographic Profile of San Angelo Youth, Ages 16-24.....	74
Figure 39: Percentage Distribution of Disconnected Youth	75
Figure 40: Summary Table for Seniors Social Health Index	80
Figure 41: Comparison of Violent Crime Indicators	85
Figure 42: Comparison of Family Violence Indicators	85
Figure 43: Comparison of Accidental Death Indicators	86
Figure 44: Comparison of Abuse of Elderly & Disabled Persons	86
Figure 45: Age Pyramid: Hispanic Population	88

Pathways to Progress

Figure 46: Age Pyramid: Non-Hispanic White Population	89
Figure 47: Projected Percent Hispanic Population	89
Figure 48: Neighborhood Scores on the Seniors of San Angelo	93
Figure 49: Percent of Population Age 65 or Older	95
Figure 50: Percent Change in Population Age 65+ Who Live Alone.....	96
Figure 51: Percent Uninsured, 2010	102
Figure 52: NWLC Report Card.....	103
Figure 53: LWBWHI Women's Index of the Concho Valley	104
Figure 54: Raising Texas Goals.....	110
Figure 55: Motivations for Pedestrian & Cycling Activities	116
Figure 56: Potential Preventable Hospitalizations.....	119
Figure 57: Selected Lifestyle Indicators	122
Figure 58: : Selected Maternal Health Indicators	123
Figure 59: Implemented Evidence-Based Interventions.....	125
Figure 60: Reducing Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations	126
Figure 61: Demographics of Disabled Children & Adults	128
Figure 62: Children's Social Health Index Report Card	131
Figure 63: Selected Indicators from the CSHI for San Angelo	132
Figure 64: Comparison of Women's Health Care Indicators.....	135
Figure 65: Comparison of Abortion Indicators.....	138
Figure 66: Abortions per 1,000 Females Ages 15-19	139
Figure 67: Deaths of Midlife Hispanics & Whites Only in Texas, 1990-2013	141
Figure 68: Deaths of Midlife Hispanics & Whites Only in Tom Green County, 1990-2013.....	141
Figure 69: Comparison of Selected Health Risks	144
Figure 70: Median Hourly Wage as a Percentage of the Living Wage, 2011	151
Figure 71: San Angelo High Demand Employment Sectors, 2011	152
Figure 72: Comparison of Veteran and Non-Veteran Economic Indicators.....	154
Figure 73: San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index	156
Figure 74: 2009-2013 Dissimilarity Index.....	158
Figure 75: Sustainable Development Poverty Level Goals	161
Figure 76: Percentages of increase in the Components of College Charges	165
Figure 77: Uniform Crime Report Indicators	172
Figure 78: The Journey to Work.....	175
Figure 79: San Angelo Food Deserts	178
Figure 80: Key Indicators in the San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index.....	181
Figure 81: Homeowner Affordability in San Angelo Neighborhoods.....	186
Figure 82: Rental Affordability in San Angelo Neighborhoods.....	186
Figure 83: 2013 Revenue and Budget Estimates	189
Figure 84: Estimate of Household Revenue by Neighborhood	190
Figure 85: Projected Number of Employed Workers	193
Figure 86: Distribution of Social Benefits	194
Figure 87: SAISD Elementary School Grades.....	197
Figure 88: Average Base Salary of Elementary Teachers in Selected West Texas Cities	199
Figure 89: San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index Comparisons	203
Figure 90: Median Annual Earnings by Gender and Education	207
Figure 91: The Demography of Poverty in Tom Green County.....	209

Pathways to Progress

Figure 92: The Behavior of the Local Poor	210
Figure 93: Changes in Income Inequality in 25 Texas MSAs	214
Figure 94: Changes in Income Inequality if San Angelo Neighborhoods	214
Figure 95: San Angelo Dissimilarity Index, 2006-2013	217
Figure 96: Comparison of Dissimilarity Index	218
Figure 97: Future Earnings by Populated Texas Counties.....	221
Figure 98: Change in Cost-Burdened Households Since 2010.....	224
Figure 99: Percent of Students Attending Elementary School with Disadvantaged Students....	226
Figure 100: GINI Index for San Angelo	228

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2011, we at Community Development Initiatives (CDI) met with Jack Cowan and Mike Kelly, editors of the San Angelo Standard Times newspaper. We sought approval to write a monthly article for the paper that would focus on stimulating thought and discussion about the social problems facing residents of San Angelo and the Concho Valley on a daily basis. We believe that such discussion is a key path to progress.

The problems CDI deals with often focus on residents that seem most troublesome to many citizens. They concern the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the youth, the unemployed and the racial/ethnic minority members of the community.

Jack and Mike were enthusiastic about our proposal and they have been staunch supporters ever since the publication of our initial article in August of 2011. Since that article, the Standard Times published monthly articles for more than five years. Those articles comprise our Pathways to Progress series.

Today, we are still enthusiastic about the opportunity Jack and Mike gave us because we believe, that in some small way, the Pathways to Progress series has helped support individuals and organizations working to find new, effective ways of solving the challenges social problems pose to the development of San Angelo and surrounding communities.

We are indebted to numerous people who contributed to the production of this volume in addition to Jack Cowan and Mike Kelly. Jessica Barker is a former student intern at Community Development Initiatives who collected the drafts of our articles and assembled them into this volume.

We are especially indebted to Susan McLane whose contributions to the production of this volume were invaluable. Susan was a graduate research assistant with CDI for several years. During her tenure, she was project director for The Survey of Health and Behavioral Health Needs of the Poor & Extremely Poor in West Texas. Her work and many editorial comments have made major contributions. She is also co-author of several articles in the series.

Cera Cantu, an AmeriCorps VISTA member, served for two years as a research assistant at CDI and made major contributions with Susan McLane to The Survey of Health and Behavioral Health Needs of the Poor & Extremely Poor in West Texas. Cera is co-author of the article, Quality of Life. We are also grateful for the contributions of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team and former Concho Valley AHEC coordinator Erin Gregg. We listed their contributions with those of many others in the [CONTRIBUTORS](#) section.

Last, we tip our hats to the leaders and residents of the Concho Valley and San Angelo who read our monthly articles. We appreciate their feedback and support in helping us achieve our primary objective at CDI. We hope to continue projects generating new knowledge and skills amongst faculty, students, and community members for sustaining future community development.

[Table of Contents](#)

SOCIAL HEALTH INDEX FOR THE CONCHO VALLEY

[***Solving Our Problems Together***](#) (**August 31, 2011**): This is the initial *Pathways to Progress* article published by the San Angelo *Standard Times*. The article lets readers know that the *Pathways to Progress* series will focus on problems of vulnerable community members most at risk of falling through the cracks and exclusion from the benefits most of us enjoy.

[***Quality of Life Figures in Decline***](#) (**February 1, 2012**): Research that demonstrates a pattern in which the welfare of Tom Green County's vulnerable people is countercyclical to the local economy. Only stronger public, private, and non-profit collaborations can work to insure that vulnerable populations do not fall through the cracks.

[***Vast Differences in Quality of Life across City***](#) (**July 4, 2012**): Increasing numbers of residents are living longer lives. Programs such as Meals for the Elderly, the Concho Valley Senior Companion Program, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program work hard to improve the quality of life of elder citizens. However, all citizens should take the steps to ensure that all the seniors in our families and in the wider community receive their full measure of respect.

[***Looking for Answers***](#) (**August 1, 2012**): CDI indexing projects track more than 100 key factors about the development of the local community and its quality of life. The indexing projects provide research results to the public to help inform discussions and processes working to improve the community.

[***Taking a Balanced Approach***](#) (**January 2, 2013**): Signs of San Angelo's recovery from the 2008 recession are evident in the latest version of CDI's San Angelo Social Health Index. Still, the index revealed some challenging work to improve the community.

[***Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back in Measure***](#) (**February 6, 2014**): CDI's 2013 Social Health Index identified improvements and troubling patterns. The index reminds us of our social responsibility to reinvest in the community to improve "that, which makes life worthwhile."

[***Community Woes Linger***](#) (**September 3, 2015**): Much progress has occurred in the well-being of San Angelo residents since 2011. However, there are still obstacles the community must address to ensure all residents enjoy a satisfying life.

[***Quality of Life***](#) (**June 2, 2016**): CDI and 72 community-based organizations across the region collaborated to complete a detailed face-to-face interview with a sample representing the more than 39,000 residents of 20 regional counties living in poverty.

[Table of Contents](#)

Pathways to Progress

Solving Our Problems Together

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

August 31, 2011

We believe at Community Development Initiatives that vigorous public discussion of community problems is a key path to progress. That is why we are enthusiastic about today's opportunity to launch a new column for the Standard Times with a focus on stimulating thought and discussion about the social problems facing San Angelo and the Concho Valley. Pathways to Progress will follow a general format. The column will identify a critical problem, provide basic facts, and introduce options or pathways to move toward solutions.

The problems Pathways deals with will often draw from those that seem most intractable to many citizens. They will often concern the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the youth, the unemployed, and the minority members of the community. Many people count these as stubborn and unsolvable problems because they believe them to be rooted in the unresponsive or irresponsible behavior of various subcultures that are code-termed as lower class, underclass, disadvantaged, criminal, gang-like, or just plain un-American.

Of course, there are individuals who behave irresponsibly and sometimes they suffer from serious problems like illness, unemployment, inadequate housing, or hunger as a result. Life experience, however, tells most of us – if we think about it – that there is a serious mismatch between irresponsible behavior at the individual level and social problems at the community level. Simply put, there are plenty of individuals behaving irresponsibly who suffer little or nothing of the problems supposedly connected to that behavior. In fact, there seems to be no “subculture” that monopolizes irresponsible conduct, and numerous responsibly behaving persons suffer from illness, unemployment, hunger, and other serious problems. The idea that some subculture -- or set of them -- promotes enough irresponsible behavior to account for serious and prevalent social problems in the community is a bankrupt and sure way to fail at making progress.

What makes sense as a way to approach serious social problems is to acknowledge that institutions allow certain individuals and groups to “fall-through-the-cracks” in various ways as they go about providing services to the community. For example, a government during an economic downturn may seek to avoid raising any revenue while it aggressively reduces expenditures by cutting funds for schools, health and mental health programs, housing assistance, and many other services provided through community institutions. At Community Development Initiatives, we think of those individuals and groups whose legitimate needs will “fall-through-the-cracks” as vulnerable populations. Vulnerable populations are simply those most at risk of exclusion from the system as the community's institutions go about their daily operations. Oftentimes, they are the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the youth, the unemployed, and the minority members of the community.

Some embarrassing facts about our local community that give meaning to the notion of a vulnerable population involve children's nutrition. The 2010 U.S. Census reports that San Angelo is home to more than 93,000 people of whom more than 23 percent are children under age eighteen. More than 61 percent of San Angelo's public school children are eligible to receive

Pathways to Progress

free or reduced school meals, and half of the Tom Green County residents receiving food stamps as of July this year are children. These data points tell us that there are 10,000 or more vulnerable children in the community needing help with food and nutrition.

A grand coalition of more than 60 churches and community-based organizations are aware of these facts. Consequently, the organizations came together to feed children during the summer weeks when school-provided meals are unavailable. Having just completed its second summer of service, the San Angelo/Tom Green County Hunger Initiative organized volunteers to provide more than 26,000 meals to children and their parents or caregivers this past summer, a 65 percent increase in meals compared to the summer of 2010.

The experience of the Hunger Initiative over these past years teaches key lessons about solving serious social problems. One lesson, for example, is the spirit of charity and generosity the Initiative brings to the table. Few communities, no matter how much money they invest, are able to move meaningful on solving serious problems without mobilizing the social capital embedded in the good spirits of the people. This is necessary to get meaningful action off the ground, and the Hunger Initiative with the people of the city and county deserve admiration for bringing the better Angels to the fore.

The Hunger Initiative also demonstrates in a big way that progress toward solving serious social problems are seldom achieved by single programs bottled up in single institutions or agencies. What the Initiative has accomplished required more than the generosity of individual and family volunteers. Indeed, it calls for an array of community organizations representing businesses, churches, government, non-profits, and schools to reach beyond mere cooperation to actual sharing of staff time and talent, facilities, and other valuable resources. The Hunger Initiative teaches that action toward solving our most serious problems demands that institutions and agencies stretch past their immediate daily concerns to form and participate in coalitions that multiply capacities to act on shared community needs and interests.

A final, and most challenging, lesson from the local Hunger Initiative is not what the Initiative has accomplished these past years, magnificent as those achievements are. The lesson's goal, however, is set in the Initiative's acknowledgment that local hunger does not result from a lack of resources. "The issue," they say, "is the distribution system – we need to get the resources we have to those who need them." The adopted long-range goal of the Initiative is "food security" for the community.

The Texas Hunger Initiative – the parent of the local effort based at Baylor University – defines food security as "ensuring that every individual... has access to three healthy meals a day, seven days a week." Clearly, this worthy goal would solve hunger problems and contribute substantially to progress on other community social problems as well. However, it also moves far past stopgap charity campaigns or other temporary aid fixes and speaks to permanent changes in the food production and distribution system of the community and beyond.

So far, the local Hunger Initiative has taken a small step toward system change by nurturing support for the start of a neighborhood garden effort. In the future, we will learn as a community if that approach can grow across the city and county. We will learn much more if the local Initiative can team up with its Texas Hunger Initiative partners to institutionalize change in the

Pathways to Progress

food economy that generates a positive trend in what are now embarrassing facts about hunger in San Angelo, Tom Green County, and in Texas.

[Table of Contents](#)

Quality of Life Figures in Decline

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones
February 1, 2012

The after effects of the nation's struggling economy cut into the local quality of life beginning in 2010. That is what updated community data from one of our core projects at Community Development Initiatives shows.

The San Angelo Social Health Index tracks 18 indicators to provide yearly evaluation of local social problems and quality of life. The current analysis goes back to the year 2000 and tracks available data through 2010.

We scored each year's numbers on a 100-point scale that sets a high bar. We based half of the score on how a particular year compares to other years since 2000. The other half compares local results to statewide outcomes for the same year. Higher scores indicate fewer social problems and better quality of life for most residents. A perfect community scoring 100 would perform better each year and better than the overall stat on all 18 indicators.

San Angelo's best score on the index was 68 in 2002. The score for 2009 was 51, and the 2010 score fell to 44. However, that result does not mean that quality declined in all aspects of the community.

To focus on different aspects, we divided the San Angelo Social Health Index into subsets. The subset results show that local economic conditions were generally improving in 2010, but social problems affecting the community's vulnerable child and elder populations became more serious and challenging.

Figure 1: The San Angelo Social Health Index

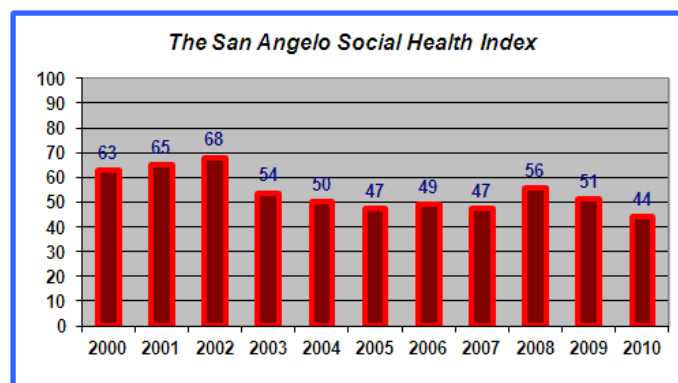


Figure 2: Index of San Angelo Economic & Social Indicators

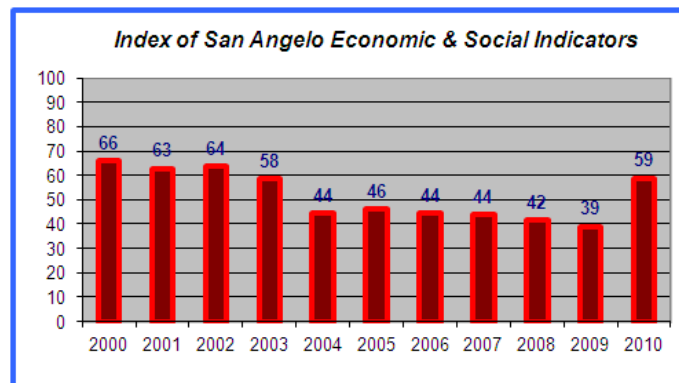
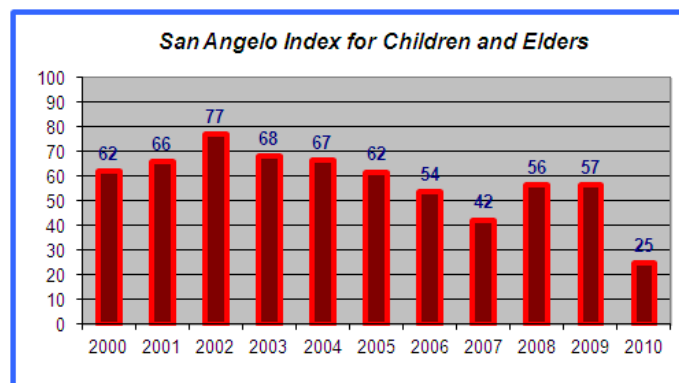


Figure 3: San Angelo Index for Children and Elders



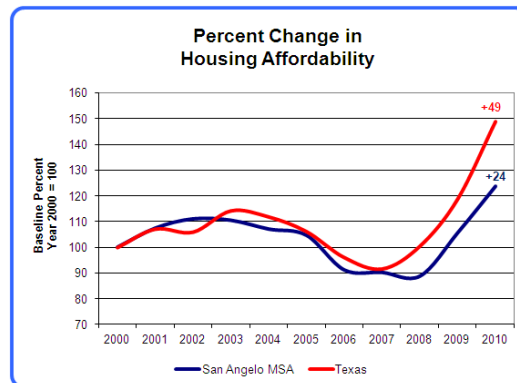
Three key factors really helped move the needle toward generally improved economic conditions in 2010. First, affordability of housing in the San Angelo metropolitan market improved significantly in 2010 compared to previous years going back to the collapse of the national housing markets in 2008.

The Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University measures housing affordability by comparing the median family income to the income required to qualify for a standard mortgage on a median priced home in local markets. In 2008, more San Angelo area families lacked the required income for that standard mortgage than at any time since 2000.

By 2010, the housing affordability measure completely reversed so that more local families than at any time following the year 2000 had enough income to qualify for the standard mortgage on a median priced home.

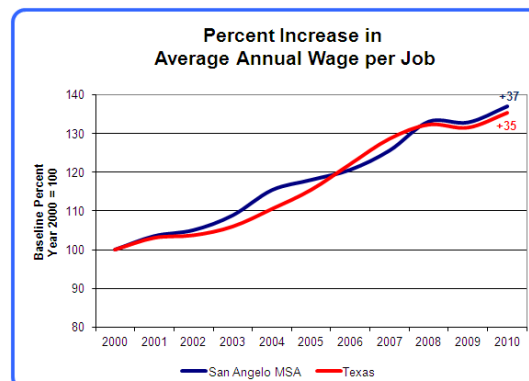
Of course, falling home prices partially account for improved housing affordability, but increased income in the local labor market was also a factor. The average wage per job in the San Angelo metropolitan area grew by 3.1 percent from \$33,750 in 2009 to \$34,806 in 2010.

Figure 4: Percent Change in Housing Affordability



Happily, a third positive economic outcome matched the increase in average wages. Employment increased in Tom Green County by about 2.4 percent between 2009 and 2010. Consequently, the annual unemployment rate started recovery in 2010 from the shock of the national recession. Monthly unemployment averaged 6.5 percent during 2009, the worst local annual rate of the decade. The 6.4 percent average in 2010 was only modestly lower, but at least it was lower as unemployment across the state continued to climb during 2010.

Figure 5: Percent Increase in Average Annual Wage per Job



Altogether, the subset of factors in the Social Health Index covering general economic and social conditions improved from a score of 39 on the 100-point scale for 2009 to 59 for 2010. At the same time, however, the overall score for the subset covering children and elders declined sharply from 57 in 2009 to 25 in 2010. Rising poverty and abuse of these vulnerable groups are key factors.

Figure 6: Percent Change in Unemployment Rate

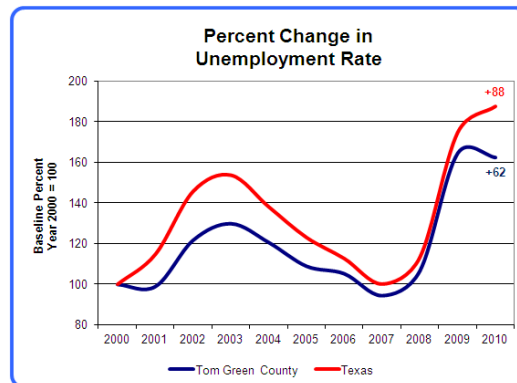
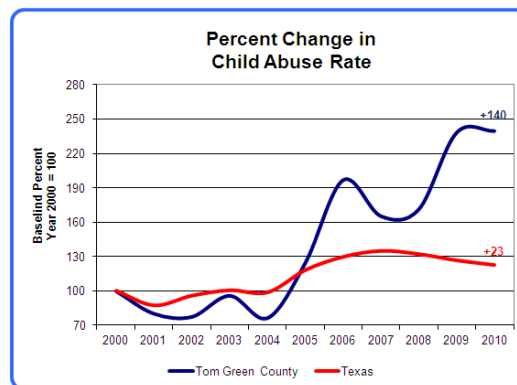


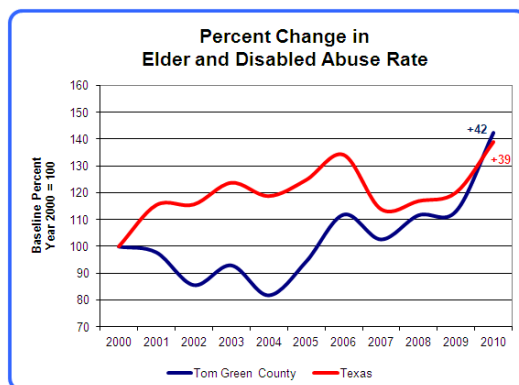
Figure 7: Percent Change in Child Abuse Rate



Rates of abuse toward children, elders, and disabled persons in the local community have been climbing to alarming levels for several years, but the alarm has sounded frightening levels since the economic collapse of 2008.

The 527 confirmed cases of child abuse in Tom Green County during 2010 gave the local community the dubious distinction of having a rate of child abuse (20 cases per 1,000 children) that doubles the statewide level (10 cases per 1,000 children). While local child abuse has increased every year since 2004, the increase accelerated by 43 percent from 14 per 1,000 children in 2008 to 20 per 1,000 children in 2009 and 2010.

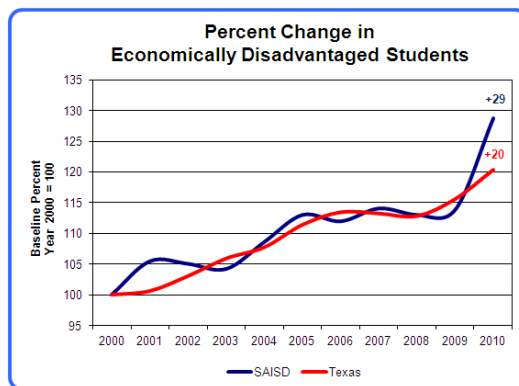
Figure 8: Percent Change in Elder and Disabled Abuse Rate



Abuse of disabled and elder persons shows comparable acceleration. Similar to children, abuse of these vulnerable groups has increased consistently in Tom Green County since 2004. In 2010, however, the 973 local abuse cases of disabled and elder persons jumped the abuse rate by 26 percent from 38 to 48 per 1,000. The county's rate of elder and disabled abuse of 48 per 1,000 in 2010 was more than triple the statewide level of 13 per 1,000.

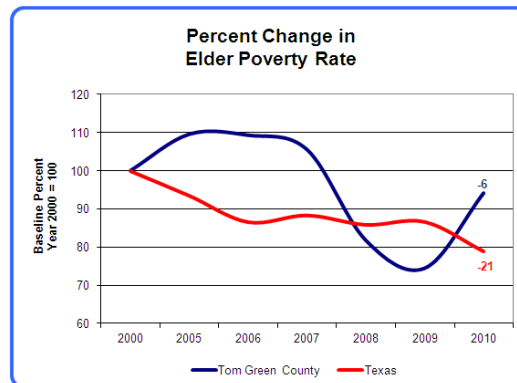
For the school year ending in 2010, 6 out of every 10 children attending San Angelo public schools qualified as economically disadvantaged. This designation means that students live in households that qualify for participation in the national school lunch program or other public assistance nutrition programs. Children from households below the poverty threshold are included, but so too are low income households that are generally below the median income level. The 61 percent of San Angelo ISD students who were economically disadvantaged in 2010 was up sharply from 54 percent for the previous year.

Figure 9: Percent Change in Economically Disadvantaged Students



Seniors in the community progressed between 2005 and 2009 as the poverty rate among elders declined by 31 percent. Most of this improvement, however, was lost during 2010 as the elder poverty rate spiked up to a 25 percent increase. One of every 10 seniors was living in poverty during 2010, and the elder poverty rate was virtually the same as it had been at beginning the decade in the year 2000.

Figure 10: Percent Change in Elder Poverty Rate



The updated San Angelo Social Health Index shows that as the economy improved in 2010, the vulnerable seniors and children of the community suffered. So, is the glass half-empty or is it half full?

One could use this expression as a way to perceive the results. After all, the improved economic conditions could be a cause for optimism (half full). On the other hand, the decline of conditions for children and seniors could be a cause for pessimism (half empty).

Whatever perception people choose, the data demonstrate a pattern in which the welfare of the community's vulnerable people is countercyclical to the local economy. Only stronger public, private, and non-profit collaborations can work to insure that vulnerable populations do not fall through the cracks.

[Table of Contents](#)

Vast Differences in Quality of Life across City

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

July 4, 2012

Nearly 13,000 persons in San Angelo were 65 years of age or older in 2010. Seniors were 13.8 percent of the city's population, an increase of almost four percent from the count in the 2000 Census at the start of the decade. In San Angelo, as elsewhere in Texas, state demographers and researchers expect the proportion of elders to grow significantly over the years ahead.

Images and expectations about "senior living" run a gamut. Some folks plan and hope to retire as energetic country-clubbers spoiling grandchildren and traveling the world. Others see struggles making ends meet and fear a frail and isolated existence wracked by illness.

The real lives of seniors also range in quality. Some lead lives approximating the image of the well healed. The quality of life for some seniors approaches the depressing vision. Most fall somewhere in between.

The ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development developed the San Angelo Index of Elders to help see the real quality of life among the elderly population. Based on the 2010 US Census, the index uses 26 indicators to compare the city's 20 census tract neighborhoods. It includes demographic factors, items describing neighborhoods and housing, aspects of income, and two areas of special interest: social isolation and guardianship of grandchildren.

Figure 11: San Angelo Index of Elders-2011

Neighborhood Scores & Rank	Census Tract	Index of Elders (26 Indicators)	Rank	Demographic Indicators (7)	Rank	Neighborhood & Housing Indicators (4)	Rank	Income Indicators (7)	Rank	Isolation Indicators (4)	Rank	Guardianship Indicators (4)	Rank
Santa Rita	10	100	1	49	8	48	12	100	1	90	5	100	1
Bentwood - Nasworthy	17.08	91	2	100	1	38	16	80	5	100	1	24	12
Southland	17.06	91	3	71	4	70	4	89	2	94	2	39	8
Vista del Arroyo	13.04	91	4	52	7	66	8	74	7	64	13	99	2
Riverside	1	84	5	78	3	84	2	77	6	94	3	11	16
Bluffs	11.01	79	6	70	5	100	1	54	11	92	4	19	13
Bonham	17.07	75	7	85	2	21	19	48	13	69	11	48	4
Sunset	13.03	74	8	61	6	65	9	85	3	86	6	7	18
Glenmore	8.01	68	9	49	9	50	11	81	4	80	8	17	14
Lake View	2	67	10	40	10	69	5	65	9	66	12	41	7
Rio Vista	14	58	11	35	13	40	14	46	14	76	9	41	6
ASU - College Hills	13.01	57	12	39	11	77	3	58	10	84	7	0	20
Paulann	3	56	13	38	12	55	10	39	17	73	10	33	10
Belaire	8.02	47	14	22	18	40	15	44	15	44	18	46	5
Ft. Concho	9	46	15	27	16	35	17	67	8	5	19	49	3
Reagan	4	44	16	8	19	67	7	38	18	52	16	38	9
Angelo Heights	12	42	17	34	14	45	13	22	19	53	15	27	11
Central	11.02	42	18	26	17	26	18	53	12	59	14	14	15
Fort Concho- East	7	40	19	28	15	69	6	43	16	46	17	1	19
Blackshear - Downtown	18	0	20	0	20	0	20	0	20	0	20	10	17
San Angelo		60		44		48		56		66		32	

The index uses a 0 to 100 point scale to indicate how a particular neighborhood is doing compared to other neighborhoods in the city. Higher ratings indicate that a neighborhood has a higher quality of life for elders than other parts of San Angelo.

The summary table of neighborhood-level scores and ranks for the index gives several interesting bits of information about the quality of life for seniors in San Angelo. For starters,

Pathways to Progress

only two neighborhoods – Santa Rita and Southland – bested the citywide scores on each of the five groups of indicators as well as the total Index of Elders.

The summary also identifies Santa Rita as having the best quality of life for seniors as indicated by the index score of 100 on the total 26 indicators for the Index of Elders. Three neighborhoods: Bentwood-Nasworthy, Southland, and Vista del Arroyo, followed with each having a score of 91. Lake View is in the middle (the median neighborhood) with a score of 67. The Blackshear – Downtown neighborhood had the lowest overall score (0).

Figure 12: Index of Elders Comparison

Indicator	Santa Rita	Lake View	Blackshear - Downtown	City
2000-2010 Senior Population Change	-14.4	7.3	-19.6	3.9
Percent Minority Seniors	8.6	36.4	73.2	23.8
Percent High School or More Education	82.9	56.9	34.7	72.5
Senior Home Ownership Rate	90.0	89.8	63.1	76.9
Senior Poverty Rate	0.0	11.9	41.4	9.9
Percent Senior Householders with Housing Costs below 30% of Income	88.2	79.0	65.4	18.3
Average Social Security Income as a Percent of Citywide Average	128.6	97.5	73.6	100.0
Percent Seniors Living Alone	27.0	21.8	66.1	32.3
Percent Grandparents Living with Grandchildren	0.0	7.0	10.1	6.4

A little more than 13 percent of Santa Rita residents are seniors compared to 18 percent in Lake View and 10 percent in the Blackshear – Downtown area. Over time, the overall senior population is growing, but it is also moving away from the center of the city to the outlying neighborhoods.

Hence, as the comparison table shows, Santa Rita and Blackshear – Downtown saw declines in senior population between 2000 and 2010. Ironically, the neighborhoods featuring the highest and lowest quality of life for seniors are each losing elder population. Neighborhoods in the middle like Lake View are gaining senior residents.

The neighborhoods also differ a great deal on other demographic factors. For example, more than seven of every 10 seniors in Blackshear – Downtown are Hispanic, African-American, or members of another minority group. Less than one of 10 in Santa Rita are minority seniors.

The two neighborhoods do not sort solely by race and ethnicity, but also by the level of education attained by elder residents. Lake View, in contrast, has a senior population more mixed in terms of educational attainment as well as racial and ethnic background.

The same differential separates Santa Rita and Blackshear – Downtown when it comes to housing and income supports for the quality of life of seniors in the two neighborhoods. Nine of every 10 elder households in Santa Rita are homeowners and 88 percent have manageable housing costs that burden less than 30 percent of their income. In Blackshear – Downtown, however, only 63 percent of households own their home, and only 65 percent have the same level of manageable housing costs.

Pathways to Progress

There are virtually no seniors in Santa Rita with income below the poverty line, but more than four of every 10 Blackshear – Downtown elders live in poverty. The quality of life for Santa Rita's elders is supplemented by Social Security checks that average 29 percent higher than the average for the city overall. The average check going to seniors in Blackshear – Downtown is 26 percent lower than the citywide amount.

Differences in quality of life reach past the demographic makeup of neighborhoods, or even the housing and income assets that folks have to support a good life. Differences in the experience-of-living are of deeper significance. Two experiences that set apart elders in the Santa Rita and Blackshear – Downtown neighborhoods are social isolation and guardianship responsibilities.

Seniors in the Blackshear – Downtown section more often live in isolation. More than six of every 10 elders in this neighborhood live alone compared to less than three of every 10 in Santa Rita. Seniors in Blackshear – Downtown are also more likely not to have access to a vehicle, to be unable to speak English well. In addition, they are divorced or widowed, which are factors that increase the chances a person will become socially isolated.

Increasing numbers of grandparents are encountering situations leading to taking guardianship of grandchildren, but this is another type of life experience not randomly found in neighborhoods across the city. Virtually no grandparents in Santa Rita have grandkids living in the household or have any other responsibilities of guardianship. Ten percent of grandparents living in the Blackshear – Downtown area live with grandkids. In addition, about eight out of every 10 of those have guardianship responsibilities, usually for a year or more.

Of course, not all senior residents of Santa Rita live the life of the well-healed country-clubbers pictured at the beginning of this article. Nor are all seniors in the Blackshear- Downtown tract suffering frailty, impoverishment, isolation, or burdensome responsibilities to take care of children. Nevertheless, Santa Rita offers a living environment befitting some of the most advantaged seniors in the city while Blackshear- Downtown is much more challenging. Lake View, along with other neighborhoods spreading out from the city center, is somewhere in between.

Frank A. Clark, who created *The County Parson* feature, published by scores of newspapers during the height of its popularity, quipped, "We've put more effort into helping folks reach old age than into helping them enjoy it." Clark used Twain-like humor to chastise many Americans about their imprudent views of the elderly.

It is impressive that increasing numbers of residents in the local community are living longer lives and reach old age. It is also laudable that programs like Meals for the Elderly, Adult Enrichment Center, Concho Valley Senior Companion Program, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program strive to improve the quality of life of elder citizens. But we can and should do more.

It should be our goal for all elder residents to live with dignity. Most seniors in all of the city's neighborhoods, after all, have done the hard work of serving the country, making untold civic contributions to the community, participating productively in the economy, and raising families. Whether they live in Blackshear-Downtown, Santa Rita, or somewhere in between, they deserve adequate income and housing, connections to vital social activities and sufficient supports for

Pathways to Progress

managing their own health and end of life process in a dignified manner. Each of us needs to take the necessary steps to ensure that all the seniors in our families and in the wider community receive their full measure of respect.

[Table of Contents](#)

Pathways to Progress

Looking for Answers

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

August 1, 2012

A year ago, we promised that Pathways would offer stimulating discussion about some of the most stubborn social problems facing San Angelo and the Concho Valley. Since then we shared core facts and viewpoints on issues like child poverty, child abuse, grandparents raising grandchildren, health care, and immigration.

Recent columns focused on two out of five different community-indexing projects that we produce at ASU's Community Development Initiatives (CDI). Pathways for June reported results of the Women's Index for the Concho Valley and July's article spotlighted findings from the San Angelo Index of Elders. The latest results for all five CDI index projects are available for downloading at <http://www.angelo.edu/dept/cdi/projects.php>.

The CDI indexing projects track more than 100 key factors about the development of the local community and its quality of life. We report some of these key data points in Pathways and provide all results to the public to help inform discussions and processes working to improve the community.

Of course, not all community members see the value of tracking statistical information on local development and quality of life. In July when we reported the gaping differences the San Angelo Index of Elders reveals in the lives of seniors, for example, one reader snapped back: "Is this news - Santa Rita is a wealthy neighborhood and Blackshear is a poor neighborhood? What a waste of time and resources."

Others tell us the index numbers help take the pulse of the community and some of the important changes occurring within it. Many use the results in some of the data-driven decisions that guide their organizations and services in the community.

These divergent reactions to the simple act of reporting data about the local community tell us that we need to do much work to advance our original ambition to introduce ways to help move toward solutions to the tenacious issues we write about in the column. Indeed, readers have noted many times that Pathways provides insightful and powerful sketches of problems, but they say it is short on solutions.

Each of us is familiar with the reactions this creates. Many university students leave classes with perhaps more than they want to know about social problems, but also with deep frustration at not having learned a surefire solution. Still, neither students nor the readers of Pathways could actually be satisfied with our preferred solutions to deeply challenging problems like the fact that the risk of violent crime in the Blackshear-Downtown section of the city is about 22 times greater than in the Bentwood-Nasworthy area.

We also doubt that readers could be overly impressed with our particular way of solving the complex problems and risks related to the fact that some 70 percent of housing in the Reagan neighborhood is 50 years or more in age. Or, that about one of every two households in the Rio Vista area has housing costs that burden more than 30 percent of the household income.

Pathways to Progress

We think our inclination alone, no matter how elegantly it might be argued, would contribute very little to improving a situation like the condition in Lake View where per capita income grew by only 12 percent over the last decade and the number of children living in poverty-level households increased by 22 percent.

These and many other challenges to progress in the community deserve more than advocacy declarations using rhetoric to push a one-sided solution over other possibilities. Indeed, polarized debate locking opposing sides into combat without end has become fashionable in politics. It can be exciting, dramatic, and entertaining at times. It becomes tiresome, however, when such debate fails repeatedly to solve problems.

The essential reason divided politics fails is that communities are unable to move meaningfully to solve complex issues without mobilizing the good spirits of the people. Only under this condition will citizens “own” community problems in a way that views poverty, public health, education, violence and abuse, a stagnant local economy, or any of countless other conditions as shared challenges. The drool of one-sided political rhetoric makes it too easy to see every community problem as someone else’s issue, and civil discourse that is needed to support community initiatives is replaced with offensive scornful hissing.

In the absence of the crucial requirement for a sense of ownership and shared challenge by citizens, communities spend huge sums of money, create numerous agencies and organizations to specialize in various issues, and find that progress is fleeting at best. That is a key reason why, when possible, Pathways spotlights contributions of community-based coalitions like the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, the Hunger Initiative, the West Texas Organizing Strategy, the Chamber of Commerce, or the CARES Drug Free Communities Coalition.

These are some of the groups that thrive on citizen engagement, recognizing that solutions to complex problems require an array of organizations representing businesses, churches, government, nonprofit agencies, and schools to reach out to those willing to share challenges and resources.

These community-based groups know that solving our most serious problems demands institutions and agencies that stretch past their specialized concerns to participate in ways that multiply capacities for action on community needs and interests.

We know it too! Moreover, by sharing Pathways to Progress, we ask you to join in!

[Table of Contents](#)

Taking a Balanced Approach

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

January 2, 2013

Signs of San Angelo's recovery from the 2008 recession are evident in the latest version of ASU's San Angelo Social Health Index. Nevertheless, the same study also reveals some challenging work to improve the community that demands attention for a dawning New Year.

A particular strength of the San Angelo Social Health Index is that it goes beyond a single point-in-time snapshot of the community to review progress over time. The Social Health Index tracks 21 indicators going back to the year 2000 up through 2011 that is the last year of available data on all 21 indicators.

We scored each year's numbers on a 100-point scale. We based half of the score on how a year compares to other years. The other half compares local results to statewide outcomes. Higher scores indicate that the community is making progress on significant social problems while improving its quality of life in comparison to the rest of Texas.

The overall average score on the 21 indicators for 2011 is 50 on the 100-point scale. This is up from a score of 44 for 2010 and the current score is the community's highest since it reached 56 in 2008 as the economy went into a tailspin during the closing months that year.

Recent reports from the Chamber of Commerce suggest a good economic recovery continued through the just completed 2012 year, and some local leaders are imagining a feverish expansion for this year due to current developments in the energy sector.

Of course, the actual record of local economic development for 2013 remains to be determined. Nonetheless, there are some noteworthy features about recent progress of the community.

Many people believe that the economy and the whole of the community rise and fall in sync with one another. In reality, however, an automatic, "as the economy goes so goes the community," type of result does not work out exactly.

In fact, the relationship between seven local economic indicators in the San Angelo Social Health Index and another seven factors that track the quality of life among children and elders shows only a modest statistical correlation over the 11 years between 2001 and 2011. Examination of short-term, year-to-year changes reveals that the ups-and-downs of the economic cycle often move in the opposite direction from the quality of life for children and elders.

These results reflect Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 musing that the economy seemingly "measures everything ... except that which makes life worthwhile."

The San Angelo Social Health Index casts light on the broader development of the community by reaching beyond the economy per se. Indeed, the summary table below is enough to provide perspective on local challenges for future years.

Figure 13: San Angelo Social Health Indicators

Summary: The San Angelo Social Health Indicators	Current Data more Negative than the State	Data is Persistently more Negative than the State*	Recent Data shows a Current Negative Trend for 3 years or more
Seven San Angelo Children & Elders Indicators			
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births		X	
Percent of students qualified for free or reduced school meals	X		X
Confirmed victims of child abuse per 1,000 children	X	X	
Percent of students graduating, earning GED, or continuing in high school	X	X	
Percent of elders below the poverty level			
Validated cases of abuse per 1,000 elder & disabled persons	X	X	
Suicides per 100,000 persons	X	X	
Seven San Angelo Households Indicators			
Incidents of family violence per 100,000 persons	X	X	
College tuition & fees as a percent of the average wage per job	X	X	X
Divorces per 1,000 persons	X	X	
Month of July SNAP receipts as a percent of the population		X	
Percent of households with costs equal to 30% or more of income			
Ratio of median family income to income required for median mortgage			
SAPD reported index crimes per 100,000 persons	X	X	
Seven San Angelo Economic Indicators			
Percent of persons under age 65 without health insurance	X		
Percent of labor force unemployed			
Year-over-year increase in the number of employed persons	X	X	
Percent of civilian labor force with post high-school education	X	X	
Year-over-year percentage increase in the average wage per job			
Housing permits per 100,000 persons	X	X	X
Real per capita gross domestic product	X	X	
Twenty-One San Angelo Social Health Indicators	14	14	3

*This designation means that local data is more negative than statewide outcomes for the majority of years between 2000 and 2011.

This summary divides the 21 indicators in the Social Health Index into three aspects of local community life. There are seven indicators on children and elders, another seven involving local households, and a final group on the economy.

The “X” marks in the table denote indicators that fit the criteria described at the top of the respective columns and the number of “X” marks for each column appears in the bottom row. Thus, the summary table pinpoints 14 indicators with current outcomes that are more negative than statewide results on the same factors. Fourteen indicators also have results that are more negative than statewide outcomes for majority of the years (“persistently more negative”) between 2000 and 2011.

Of these, twelve indicators are both more negative and persistently more negative in comparison to the state. It is not a good thing that, year-after-year, the local community’s results on more than half (57%) of the items in the San Angelo Social Health Index are more negative than the overall state. By working together, the city’s key institutions, organizations, agencies, households, families, and citizens can and should improve that record. That is one challenge for this year and beyond.

Better news from the summary is that only three of the 21 indicators show a current negative trend for the three most recent years or more. However, these deserve attention precisely because they are currently trending in negative directions for the community.

One of these is the number of housing permits issued per 100,000 persons residing in the community. There were 467 permits per 100,000 residents in 2009. This number tumbled to 128 per 100,000 in 2011. It is likely that the 2012 release of data on housing permits will show that continued recovery from the recession has already reversed this negative three-year trend.

Pathways to Progress

At a deeper level, however, local housing permits have lagged behind the state by an average of 404 permits per 100,000 residents over the years since 2000. This fact reflects the challenging long-range pattern of slower population growth, as well as sluggish economic expansion, in the local community.

The rising cost of college as it relates to local wage levels is another indicator plotting a strong negative trend within the community. It is true that college tuition and fees are taking a larger bite out of household and family paychecks all over the nation. In the local community, however, that bite for attending ASU has more than doubled itself from 4.9 percent of the average wage per job in 2000 to 10.2 percent in 2011. That is why we delved into the details of this on-coming community development challenge in the September of 2012 edition of Pathways.

We noted in the column that the year-after-year escalator of college cost is raising the question of what a college education is worth to students and their families. We concluded, then and now, that the way the state and local community addresses this challenge would determine how widely the college door is kept open to aid the personal aspirations of individuals and how effectively the university will perform its civic, social, and economic functions.

The third negative trending indicator spotlights an education challenge focused at the primary and secondary public school levels. The percent of San Angelo ISD students in 2011 who qualified free or reduced school meals (so-called “economically disadvantaged students”) stood at 62 percent, a number that has increased over each of the last four years and has climbed continuously from 48 percent in the year 2000.

Although the current local percentage is larger than the statewide 59 percent, the state has nevertheless seen a similar explosion of economically disadvantaged students since the year 2000. Both the local and statewide trends reflect a benign neglect of child poverty in Texas that we detailed in the April of 2012 Pathways.

That column recognized that San Angelo has many talented citizens and strong organizations that care deeply about children in poverty and work tirelessly to help. Ironically, they toil in a context of budget cutting and austerity in the state’s safety net for families designed to keep tax burdens low and maximize work incentives within poverty households. Laudable as these objectives are, they do not prevent children from falling through the cracks and they leave the local community to pay severe long-term social costs that only manifest in future generations.

Signs of San Angelo’s recovery from the 2008 economic recession deserve celebration this New Year. The challenging work that remains to improve the community deserves resolve.

[Table of Contents](#)

Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back in Measure

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

February 6, 2014

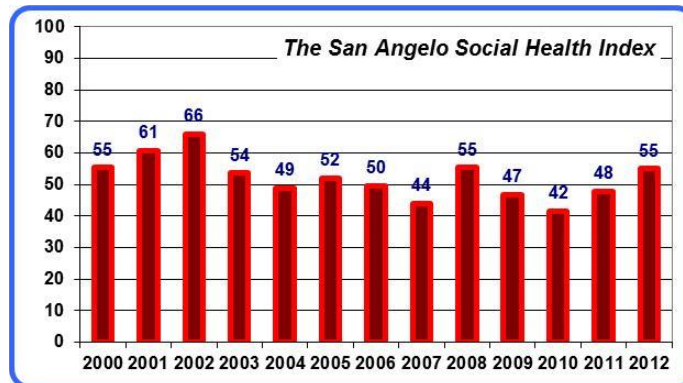
Marc Maringoff first published America's Index of Social Health in 1985. A professor of public policy at Fordham University, Maringoff was working to improve on a situation identified earlier by Robert F. Kennedy.

Noticing the tendency of Americans to accept various economic indicators as primary measures of the state of the nation, Kennedy commented in 1968 that frequent tallies and tracking of the gross domestic product and other economic measures actually tell us very little about "that which makes life worthwhile." He had in mind things like the worth of our children's education, the strength of our marriages and households, and the quality of life in our neighborhoods and communities.

In the same spirit of working toward an evidence-based review of the local pathway toward improvement, Community Development Initiatives (CDI) at the ASU Center updates the San Angelo Social Health Index each year. A particular strength of the index is that it goes beyond a single point-in-time snapshot to review progress over time. Following Maringoff's lead and RFK's insight, it tracks 21 statistical indicators, some focused on the local economy but many others on the households, children, and elders.

The measurements trace back to the year 2000 up through 2012 – the most recent data available for most of the factors. Community Development Initiatives scores the results for each year on a 100-point scale. CDI bases half of the score on how a year compares to other years. The other half compares local results to statewide outcomes. Higher scores indicate progress in the community on significant problems and improvements in the local quality of life compared to the rest of Texas.

Figure 14: San Angelo Social Health Index

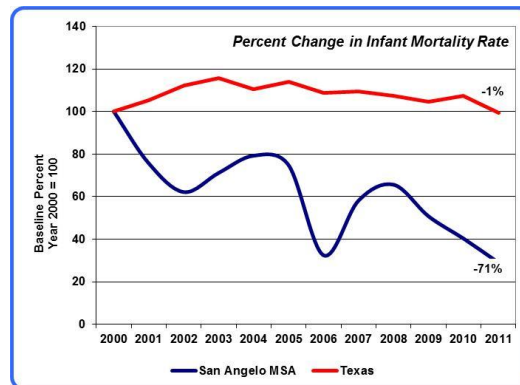


The overall score for 2012 is 55 on the 100-point scale. This represents an improvement over the previous year, and it is equal to the community's score before the economic plunge in the closing months of 2008. The community had better results on the index only twice in 2001 and 2002

Pathways to Progress

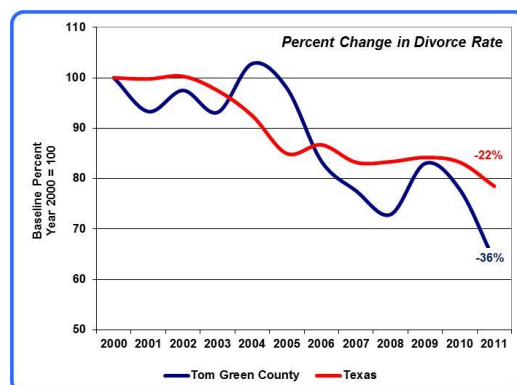
The current outcomes of the San Angelo Social Health Index include some wonderful achievements for the community. For example, the local infant mortality rate, illustrated below, was 3.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011. This rate had been higher than state as a whole for eight of the 12 years between 2000 and 2011, but it crossed below the state level in 2009 and has remained lower than the overall state for the three most recent years of data. The infant mortality rate has fallen by 71 percent since the year 2000. This is a major public health improvement for the community.

Figure 15: Percent Change in Infant Mortality Rate



On a similarly positive note, there are some signs that local families are on stronger footings. The local divorce rate, for instance, stands at 3.2 divorces per 1,000 residents of Tom Green County according to the most recent data for 2011. While this is a close match to the statewide rate of 3.1 per 1,000 residents, the local community has a more impressive trend toward fewer divorces than the state as a whole. The current local divorce rate is 36 percent lower than the level of 5.1 divorces per 1,000 residents in the year 2000. The statewide rate fell by 22 percent in the same time.

Figure 16: Percent Change in Divorce Rate



Stronger footings for local families also augment the affordability of housing. Estimates for 2012 indicate that 26.1 percent of San Angelo households are cost-burdened by virtue of paying housing costs equal to 30 percent or more of the household income. The San Angelo percentage is five points lower the state as a whole. For each of the 13 years from 2000 and 2012, San

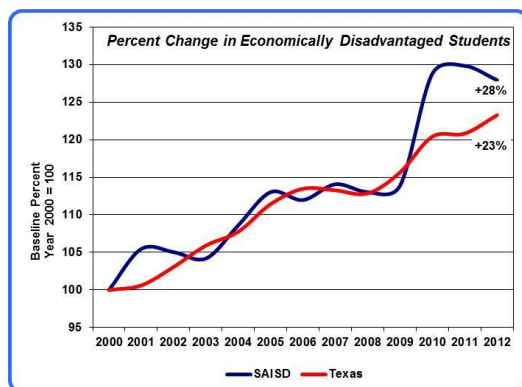
Pathways to Progress

Angelo maintained a more affordable ratio between housing prices and household income levels than the composite of all other Texas Metropolitan areas. This is true even with recent run-ups of housing prices.

Other favorable developments documented in the San Angelo Social Health Index include a 28 percent reduction of the local crime rate between 2000 and 2012 and a 65 percent increase in per capita income over the same period. As intended by RFK back in 1968, these indicators reveal our progress on some of the things making “life worthwhile.” Other factors in the index disclose challenging work required in this vein.

One problem evolving over time is a trend toward more food insecurity in the community. The most recent data on economically disadvantaged students in San Angelo ISD shows a modest decrease from 60.9 percent in 2011 to 60.4 percent.

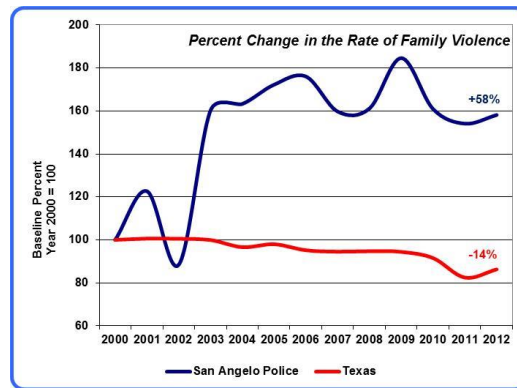
Figure 17: Percent Change in Economically Disadvantaged Students



Regardless, this number has hovered above 60 percent since 2010 and has increased by 28 percent since the year 2000. Measuring from mid-year (month of July) SNAP enrollment figures, use of food stamps also has increased by 37 percent since 2000. San Angelo volunteers working at Wesley Soup Kitchen, Grace, and Grub, Kids Eat Free, Meals for the Elderly, Food Bank, and the Texas Hunger Initiative know there are too many hungry who do not know where the next meal will come from.

Another deeply troubling pattern is violence and abuse. The local rate of child abuse for 2012 was 16.1 victims per 1,000 children. This was a spike up from 13.1 per 1,000 the year before. More stunning is that the child abuse rate increased by 92 percent since the year 2000. Additionally, there was a 58 percent increase in the level of family violence incidents requiring police response. This includes a disabled and elder abuse rate that outpaces the overall state each year by an average of 24 incidents per 1,000. In addition, there was a suicide rate that exceeded the statewide rate by yearly average of 3.7 cases per 100,000 residents.

Figure 18: Percent Change in the Rate of Family Violence



The economic indicators in the San Angelo Social Health Index are in basic agreement with news from the Chamber of Commerce, the Workforce Development Board, and other local economic development agencies. Employment has recovered from the 2008 recession and is on a path of growth. The local amount of personal income per person has grown by more than 20 percent since 2009 and reached a level in 2012 that was 65 percent over the year 2000 mark. Permits to build new housing units are showing robust increases, and the estimated value of all things produced in the local economy -- the local gross domestic product -- is now on a growth path after being stagnant for most of the past decade.

One local economic leader recently commented that 2014 promises to be a good year; possibly the “best of times,” he said. This year’s update reveals the possibility for that to come true. Following RFK’s counsel, however, the data tell us that the best of times requires more than a booming economy. The San Angelo Social Health Index reminds us of our social responsibility to reinvest in the community to improve “that, which makes life worthwhile.”

[Table of Contents](#)

Community Woes Linger

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

September 3, 2015

The Standard Times published the first Pathways to Progress Viewpoints column four years ago. We believed the articles would stimulate thought and discussion about the social problems facing our city and other communities throughout the Concho Valley by following a general format to identify a critical problem, provide some basic facts, and suggest options, or pathways, to move toward progress.

Some citizens think the issues we deal with in Pathways are permanent. This view holds that certain social problems are unsolvable. Consequently, it is taken-for-granted that issues like many of the ones in Pathways are “normal” problems that communities simply have to live with.

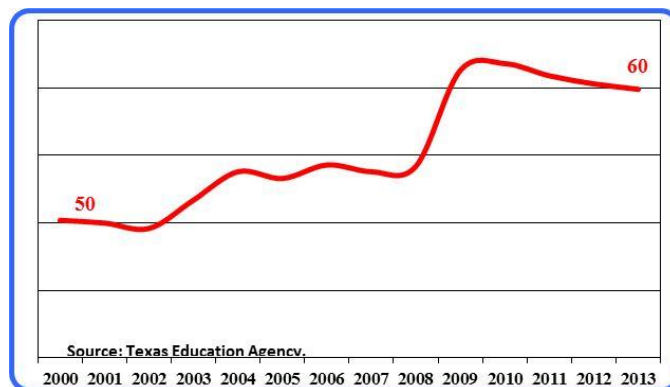
In the first Pathways for September of 2011, we highlighted a plan to focus the series on problems involving vulnerable community members most at risk of falling through the cracks and exclusion from the benefits most of us enjoy. To illustrate such a vulnerable group, we cited the fact that, back then, 61 percent of San Angelo's public school children were eligible for reduced or free school meals. We estimated that there were at least 10,000 or more vulnerable children in the community needing help with food and nutrition.

We applauded the local Hunger Initiative Kids Eat Free program in that first article. We praised the program for bringing a coalition of many community organizations together to provide 26,000 free meals to children and their caregivers during the summer of 2011. Most of all, however, we celebrated the vision of the local and statewide Hunger Initiative.

Their vision embraces the need to move past stopgap charity fixes and temporary aid to change the local community and wider society so that every person has access to three healthy meals a day, every day. Hunger, after all, is not a problem of food scarcity. It is a problem of food insecurity, which tolerates the existence of vulnerable community members with no access to the abundance of food.

Still, the needle has not moved. The percent of children who are eligible for reduced or free school meals remains at 60 percent. More troubling is the fact that this percentage climbed from 50 percent since the year 2000, and the state as a whole is following a similar trajectory. Is this really a problem San Angelo and Texas should take-for-granted as unsolvable, assuming it is a normal condition that families, children, and communities must learn to live with?

Figure 19: Percentage of Children Eligible for Reduced or Free Lunch

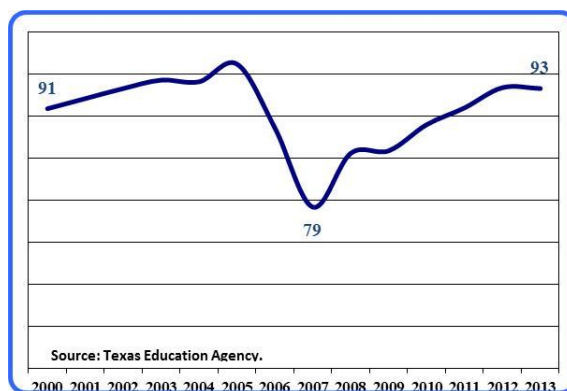


Pathways revisited the vulnerabilities of children in several additional articles since that first one in 2011. Immigrants, minorities, seniors, women, and the medically uninsured are among other vulnerable groups that have appeared. We have discussed poverty, housing, health, employment, inequality, and violence issues.

There are reasons to prize progress made in parts of the local community. For example, the infant death rate fell by 52 percent from 11 per 1,000 live births in 2000 to five per 1,000 in the most recent available data for 2012. As noted in Pathways last month, health care in San Angelo is delivering in important ways compared to other places in Texas.

Other essential institutions of the local community are also delivering in key ways. San Angelo ISD, for instance, increased the high school completion rate by 14 points from its low of 79 percent for the class of 2007 to 93 percent for the class of 2014. The crime rate in 2013 was 44 percent lower than its peak in 2003, and income per person in San Angelo grew by 72 percent from 2000 to 2013.

Figure 20: High School Completion Rate



Noteworthy achievements, but frankly, these are performance indicators that should set the norm for our community institutions. On the other hand, it is even more shameful that the community's economic achievements allow six of ten children to experience insecure access to food.

Pathways to Progress

Similarly, local levels of domestic violence are astounding despite the community's success at reducing crime. Four-hundred-eighty-three is the number of confirmed victims of child abuse in Tom Green County reported by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services for 2013.

This computes to a child abuse rate of 18 victims per 1,000 children and compares to a statewide rate of nine per 1,000 children. Our local rate was 114 percent higher than in the year 2000. The statewide increase was 12 percent over the same period.

Criminal family violence incidents are another manifestation of the stunning local level of domestic violence. Most family violence incidents encountered by police in Texas are assaults (97% of more than 185,000 incidents in 2013) between family members. Sex offenses between family members are the next most frequent type (2.4% in 2013).

The San Angelo Police Department responded to 1,348 family violence incidents in 2013. This translates to a rate of 1,395 incidents per 100,000 people in the city and compares to a statewide rate of 701 incidents per 100,000 Texans. Sadly, since the year 2000, the local level of family violence has increased by 54 percent while the statewide number declined by 17 percent.

At ASU Community Development Initiatives, we believe that vigorous public discussion of community problems is an important key to finding pathways for progress. The Standard Times graciously gives us opportunities to probe some the community's most difficult and complicated social problems.

We, in turn, are immensely grateful to the many individuals who read Pathways and take away small morsels they find useful to work with others toward solutions and betterment in the community. We profoundly admire and appreciate your countless contributions.

At same time, it amazes us that some citizens accept issues like violence, degradation, and tragic poverty with cynical or fatalistic assumptions leading them to relegate these and other serious social problems to a dustbin of nuisances in their lives. This, in itself, is tragic.

Every sustainable community needs to be nimble at making change to patch the cracks in its institutions that the most vulnerable members fall through. The support of citizens, and optimally, some of every person's talent, is crucial for making change.

We look forward in Pathways to Progress to modest contributions by learning and sharing to help members of the community team up for institutionalizing change. We begin by remembering that to elevate the least among us goes to benefit every one of us.

As Michael Harrington, the noted analyst of poverty and social problems, said, "One cannot raise the bottom of a society without benefiting everyone above."

[Table of Contents](#)

Quality of Life

*Kenneth L. Stewart, Laurence Jones, Susan McLane, and Cera Cantu
June 2, 2016*

During 2015, Community Development Initiatives (CDI) at ASU had the privilege to lead an important yearlong study of regional health needs. CDI conducted the Survey of Health and Behavioral Health Needs of the Poor & Extremely Poor in West Texas between January and December of 2015.

The study covered 20 counties including Coke, Concho, Crockett, Edwards, Irion, Kimble, Kinney, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Mills, Reagan, Runnels, San Saba, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton, Tom Green, Upton, and Val Verde. CDI and 72 community-based organizations across the region collaborated to complete a detailed face-to-face interview with a sample representing the more than 39,000 residents of the 20 counties living in poverty.

CDI trained members of many local communities included in the study to help conduct interviews. Working along with CDI's own research staff, they completed 597 interviews, including 280 (46.9%) with respondents from the more than 14,000 "extremely poor" residents in the region who live on incomes below half of the poverty level.

Interviewers collected information on more than 170 health-related factors. These included 31 items modeled on questions answered in 2013 by respondents representing the general adult population of Texas in an annual survey called the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

Conducted statewide by the Texas Department of State Health Services, the BRFSS is part of a national CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention) effort to track and monitor behavior and health risks in the overall population. By including 31 related items, the project gained the ability to compare responses of poor and extremely poor residents to the general regional population as reported in the BRFSS results.

A general result of these comparisons is that the level of health risk among poor residents in the region is higher, much higher than the general population. For instance, most knowledgeable citizens recognize that people in poverty often do not have a personal doctor, and frequently have trouble paying the cost of going to see one. However, many would not anticipate the large gaps the survey revealed between the poor and the overall adult population on these important factors affecting access to health care.

Many people also know that low-income adults are more likely to smoke or use tobacco products. Fewer would guess, however, that 25 percent more local adults in poverty are current tobacco users.

In fact, more than four of every ten (43.4%) of the 275 Tom Green County residents interviewed in survey of the poor and extremely poor reported they smoke or use tobacco. This compares to an estimate from the 2013 BRFSS of 18.7 percent for the overall adult population of the county. A higher level of exposure to second-hand smoke in the home is a related issue for local residents living in poverty.

Pathways to Progress

Meanwhile, the American Lung Association's recent 2016 State of Tobacco Control report gives Texas a straight "F" grade for creating access to tobacco cessation services, despite estimates that smoking costs Texans over \$8.8 billion annually and more than 28,000 die from smoking-related causes.

Obesity is another significantly elevated health risk within the local poverty population. The interview data indicates that 44.6 percent of the poor in Tom Green County are obese compared to 32.8 percent of the overall county population according to the BRFSS. The added level of difficulty reported by the poor in getting access to fresh fruits and vegetables aggravates the problem.

The excess number of people in poverty who report doctors diagnosed them with depression is one of the most telling findings from the survey. One of two (50.2%) poor and extremely poor residents of Tom Green County confirmed to interviewers that a professional told them that they had depression or anxiety. A comparable item in the 2013 BRFSS indicated that medical or mental health professionals similarly diagnosed 15.1% of the county's overall adult population.

Gregory Rowe, executive director of the regional MHMR Services, touched on the potent importance of this disparity in his excellent recent appeal to raise awareness of mental illness. In the May 12 edition of the Standard Times, Mr. Rowe wrote, "... people living with a serious mental illness die 25 years earlier than other Americans, largely because of other treatable medical conditions that are complicated by mental illness."

Based on these and other findings from the survey, CDI identified hundreds of needs for reducing health risks across the 20 counties in the study region. These included 20 challenging issues for Tom Green County.

The project team contacted a wide variety of key informants comprised of community leaders and stakeholders who work every day in health care, or in the trenches providing services to the poor to gain a sense of the priority they should attach to various needs. Thirty-eight key informants in Tom Green County rated each of the 20 issues identified by CDI from the survey results.

The key informants used a rating system to assign priorities. They rated every issue on each of four separate factors including: 1) Prevalence - the number of people potentially affected; 2) Significance - the consequences of not addressing the need; 3) Impact - the impact on vulnerable populations; and 4) Feasibility - the likelihood that the community takes action.

Informants used higher ratings on a five-point scale to assign a greater sense of Prevalence, Significance, Impact, or Feasibility to an issue. Of course, lower scores signaled less priority.

The average of the four ratings provided the overall priority score for each issue. The process resulted in seven top priorities for Tom Green County, shown in the following chart.

Figure 21: Top Health Needs

Top Health Needs Prioritized by 38 Key Informant Community Leaders	Prevalence	Significance	Impact	Feasibility	Average
Address growing numbers of children and seniors	4.1	4.2	4.2	3.7	4.1
Address problems related to diabetes	3.8	4.1	4.2	3.4	3.9
Invest in community health needs	3.8	4.3	4.2	3.2	3.9
Prevent obesity	3.9	4.1	4.1	3.2	3.8
Reduce costs and barriers	3.9	4.1	4.2	2.9	3.8
Increase services for depression	3.8	4.1	4.1	3.2	3.8
Increase services for alcohol and drug abuse	3.7	4.0	4.0	3.3	3.8

Concerted efforts to work together as a community on any one of these priorities could lead to immense improvements in the quality of life among the county's poverty population while averting countless early deaths from preventable causes and saving millions or billions of dollars in avoidable economic costs to the community.

To us, the most challenging result from the rating process is the relatively timid sense of feasibility conveyed by the key informants. Feasibility, as noted, refers to the assessment by key informants of the likelihood of the community taking action on a given health-related need.

For the top Tom Green County priorities, feasibility ratings from the 38 key informants ranged from 2.9 (for the need to reduce cost and other barriers to care) to 3.7 (for addressing the needs of seniors and children). The average feasibility rating for top seven priorities was 3.3 on the 5-point scale.

This finding shows the key informants generally held only a moderate sense that community actions to address priority health needs are feasible. The finding clashes with much stronger assessments from key informants that the top priority health needs strongly influence vulnerable groups and carry significant consequences if not addressed.

Like the beloved journalist and Texas commentator Molly Ivins quipped, "'It's a low-tax, low-service state - so shoot us. The only depressing part is that, unlike Mississippi, we can afford to do better. We just don't."

For the sake of a vibrant community and sustainable economy in the future, we hope Tom Green County's local leaders and citizens will come together to work in ways like never before to solve just one of the challenging, high priority health and behavior risks.

[Table of Contents](#)

CHILDREN OF THE CONCHO VALLEY

Falling through the Cracks (October 5, 2011): Children living in poverty are a festering problem in San Angelo. Children live in poverty matters because it connects to school dropouts, decreased earning capacity, higher reliance on Medicaid, welfare, and public charity, and greater involvement with criminal activity. Large numbers of children in poverty means a lifetime of hurt for the children and for the community.

The Well-Being of Children in Tom Green County (November 30, 2011): The initial Children's Social Health Index report uses annual data reported by a variety of state and federal agencies. The data covers each of the Concho Valley counties and each year since the turn of the century. It tracks key indicators on four aspects of child well-being throughout the region including education, economic well-being, health, and safety.

Battle against Child Poverty Goes On (April 4, 2012): Lifting children from poverty is not a result of austerity cuts to public spending trying to teach poor folks about the need to work. Instead, the safety net for children and families is in need of enhancement so that it can actually lift people up, rather than being merely a desperate effort to prevent a fall.

Child Abuse in our Area (May 2, 2012): Texas Child Protective Services investigated 297,971 alleged instances of child abuse across Texas and confirmed 65,948 allegations. Tom Green County contributed more than its share to this picture. The county's 26,373 children comprised only about four of every 1,000 children living in the state. Yet the county's 1,596 alleged victims of child abuse made up slightly less than six of every 1,000 accusations across the state.

It Takes a Village to Raise Kids Right (October 3, 2012): The San Angelo ISD has started the long and hard work of melting away the gaps that separate the worlds of the city's children. Important school infrastructure investments in recent years have renewed and revitalized school facilities serving city neighborhoods that are less privileged than the high-income areas of the city.

Children Are All of Our Future (July 21, 2013): For three of the four years between 2008 and 2011, San Angelo's rate for uninsured children under the age of 18 was showing a progressive downward trend at levels that were three-to-five percentage points better than the state's progress toward reducing uninsured children. However, in 2011, the city's rate spiked, shooting the percent of uninsured children up to 15 percent, or two percentage points higher than the state's 13 percent.

How Are the Children? (January 2, 2014): The effect of extreme poverty areas in San Angelo extends to the schools. Elementary school-age kids in Blackshear-Downtown, for example, attend schools where about 77 percent of students are from economically disadvantaged households and half are "at-risk" of dropping out.

Local Domestic and Child Abuse Levels Too High (October 2, 2014): Family violence in the year 2000 stood at 8.8 incidents per thousand people in Tom Green County. That rate amounts to a 47 percent increase between 2000 and 2013. The statewide rate actually fell by 17 percent during this time. Incredibly, however, the facts about child abuse are just as alarming.

Pathways to Progress

[Saying NO to Citizen Complacency](#) (*April 2, 2015*): A previous release of the CDI Violence Index in December of 2013 tagged San Angelo as one of the most dangerous cities when compared with three other West Texas cities that included Abilene, Odessa, and Midland. The current update indicates improvements that now position the city as one of the safest areas of the region.

[Teen Births Cost us All](#) (*January 7, 2016*): There is a downward trend in the teen birth rate across Tom Green County. Despite the progress, though, the social and economic costs of teen childbearing remain staggering. The costs are both immediate and long-term, and the impacts are not limited only to teen parents and their children.

[No Reason for Complacency](#) (*April 7, 2016*): Changes in four of the six indicators in the CDI Violence Index for 2015 showed that San Angelo and Tom Green County was still experiencing rising levels of child abuse.

[Disconnected Youth](#) (*December 1, 2016*): Between 2010 and 2014, fifty-nine percent of the estimated average of disconnected youth lived in the 11 census tracts where non-Hispanic white residents are the majority. This pattern represents a reversal from the prior 2006-2010 five-year period when about 56 percent of disconnected youth resided in minority-majority neighborhoods.

[Table of Contents](#)

Falling Through the Cracks

Laurence Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

October 5, 2011

Like the local group, Community Reinvesting in Educational Opportunities (CREO), we believe that San Angelo is a great place to raise a family. We say this with pause, however, because our studies at Community Development Initiatives reveal some alarming trends involving our city's young people.

In 2009, for instance, almost 14 percent of families in San Angelo had incomes that fell below the official federal poverty threshold. Of course, poverty does not visit randomly upon families and the children who depend on them. In our community, as in Texas and the nation, families with children in poverty are more likely to be Black or Hispanic, and single-parent families.

However, the sad fact is that families in poverty include about one of every four children (25%) in San Angelo who live with their married mothers and fathers. Still, the knowledge that poverty ravages minority and single parent families at higher rates is part of the popular views on the subject. Perhaps this is one reason why mean-spirited citizens cling to the notion that when a child lives in poor conditions, a "welfare queen and deadbeat dad" who are not married to one another, are the stereotypes that created the problem.

Apart from a few tragic instances that might fit this mold, the idea hopelessly condemns vulnerable children to a lifetime of negative outcomes and fails to square the facts about most families in poverty. Beyond reach of the ugly outrage flamed by images of welfare schemers are key facts about poor families in San Angelo showing that the vast majority (nearly 90%) do not receive public assistance income on any regular basis, and about three of every four (75%) have one or more adult members who work.

Among the devastating consequences for children, growing up in poverty is failure at school. The 2010 class at San Angelo Independent School District had lost 11 percent of its members who started high school four years earlier in 9th grade when it took the stage to celebrate graduation. This longitudinal dropout rate was actually a marked improvement over the 14 percent dropout rate for the class of 2009 a year earlier. However, the local rate is nearly four percentage points higher than the statewide level, even as Texas ranks near the top of states when it comes to kids dropping out of school. Back in San Angelo, local schools have particular difficulties holding onto so-called Title I students who participate in school programs specifically aimed to improve the achievement of disadvantaged children. The same problem pertains to students deemed "at-risk" of dropping out because they demonstrate one or more out of several key academic or behavior adjustment problems going as far back as kindergarten or 1st grade.

Children living in poverty matters; first because it connects to dropping school; and then to significantly decreased earning capacity, higher reliance on Medicaid, welfare, and public charity, and greater involvement with criminal activity. Large numbers of children in poverty, as in San Angelo, means a lifetime of hurt for the children and for the community.

Pathways to Progress

Thankfully, there is no shortage of social entrepreneurs and community-based organizations seeking to address problems of child poverty in our city. Many churches provide aid and comfort to needy families as well as constructive youth programs or activities, and a review of the community's non-profit organizations reveals many carrying out missions to help troubled families and children with services ranging from shelter to food aid, counseling, scholarships, and a range of positive youth development activities. Some local groups have recognized that the school system alone cannot solve the problems created by the city's high dropout rate, so they seek to form partnerships and coalitions to keep kids in school.

CREO is one such group. Using the awareness that mentoring programs can contribute to better school performance, reduced alcohol and drug use, and fewer violent acts by school age children, CREO has collaborated with the school district to mentor disadvantaged and at-risk students in an effort to help reduce the system's dropout rate. CREO is also teaming with a number of other community partners including the NAACP and the Southside Lions Club to provide computers at no cost to disadvantaged students in a project to encourage children to engage with technology in way that stresses academic performance, creates an active learning mindset, and spreads from the students to friends and other family members.

Café con Leche is another program that CREO is engaging in collaboration with the San Angelo P-16+ Education Partnership based at the Chamber of Commerce. Originating from a similar program at the University of Texas Institute for Public School Initiatives, the major goal of Café con Leche is to engage families in a "kitchen table" manner that stimulates a learning culture in the home and excites students about their potentials for college. Café con Leche sessions stress that college is accessible and affordable despite social, economic, and academic barriers.

These and other community groups working together to keep students in school are inspiring progress in the community, and we look forward to times when San Angelo's child poverty and school dropout rates are abated. However, one vulnerable group that appears to draw little, or too little, support for a helping-hand-up. These children are not in danger of dropping school and experiencing the misfortunes that follow. They are the young adults who have already fallen-through-the-cracks by not completing high school.

As of 2009, the US Census Bureau estimates that persons under the age of 25 headed about 1,500 San Angelo families. About half of these had a married couple leading the family according to the estimate, while mostly single females headed the other half. The estimated poverty rate for this group of families was 30.5 percent compared to the 14 percent poverty rate for all families in the city. At the same time, individuals under age 25 comprised about one of every four unemployed workers and had an unemployment rate that was nearly double the level for the overall workforce. These are young adults striving to gain a toehold in the community, and ironically, they are now raising some of the children in poverty that so concern the school system and groups like CREO. They are a truly vulnerable population of individuals and families in a community that offers them little in the way of a hand-up and a pathway out.

One way some 270 communities, including five in Texas, have approached the task of offering a pathway to progress for vulnerable young adults and families is by developing collaboration projects under the national YouthBuild umbrella. In 2010, nearly 10,000 young adults under age 25 across the nation were participants in YouthBuild collaborations. They were the hard-cases in their communities. All were poor; nearly all were high school dropouts; most had previously

Pathways to Progress

received public assistance; many had been in the criminal courts; and young adult parents comprised nearly one- third.

The secret to YouthBuild is that young adults work full-time, receive a modest wage, and focus on two objectives: completing the high school diploma or GED and learning skills on-the-job. Nationally, about 78,000 young adults have completed YouthBuild since 1994 and 25 percent of those went on to enroll in college. Follow-up studies show that, years after completing the program, three out of four YouthBuild participants either were in college or regularly employed.

Something along the lines of the YouthBuild model may be a good investment for collaboration of individuals, groups, and agencies in San Angelo to make in the most vulnerable and striving young adults of the community.

[Table of Contents](#)

The Well-Being of Children in Tom Green County

Kenneth L. Stewart, Laurence Jones, and Makayla Cisneros

November 30, 2011

The holidays are here! This time of year, more than any other time, family members, and especially the children receive thoughts and acts of kindness. Indeed, a particularly wondrous feature of the season is that so many people find a means to care, not only for their own children, but for the children of others too!

Toys-for-Tots boxes fill-up fast, and people rush to hang their ornaments and gifts on Angel trees at this time of year. It is astonishing how the community reaches out to vulnerable children and families at Christmas time. However, it is equally astounding to find how the community fails in support for the same vulnerable children and families during the rest of the year.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation collects data each year from across the nation on the well-being of children. The Foundation's Kids Count data covers children's economic security, as well as their education, health, and safety. Using 10 key indicators of child well-being as a basis for comparison, the Casey Foundation releases an annual Kids Count Data Book that profiles and ranks each of the fifty states. The 2011 Kids Count results rank Texas 35th among the states when it comes to the well-being of children.

ASU's Community Development Initiatives created a similar project to assess the well-being of children in a way that applies more directly to the local community. The Concho Valley Children's Social Health Index (CSHI) is the result.

Like Kids Count, CSHI uses annual data reported by a variety of state and federal agencies. The data covers each of the Concho Valley counties and each year over the past decade. It tracks 21 key indicators on four aspects of child well-being throughout the region including education (5 indicators), economic well-being (6 indicators), health (5 indicators), and safety (5 indicators).

Figure 22: Tom Green County Children's Health Index

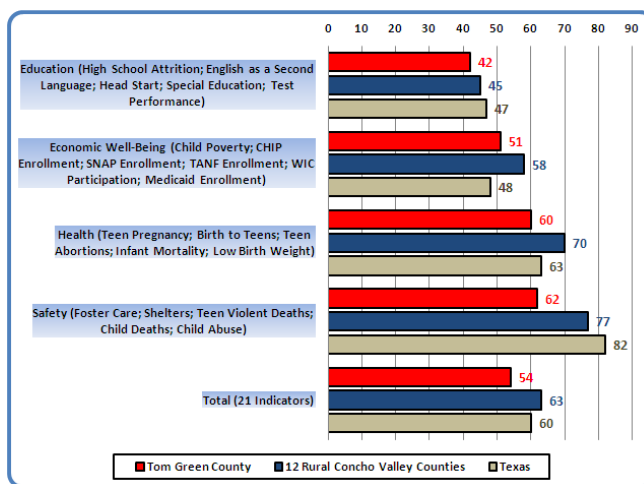
Tom Green County	Rank	Score	Concho Valley	Texas
Children's Index (21 Indicators)	11	54	63	60
Education Domain (5 Indicators)	10	42	45	47
High School Attrition	8	81	77	19
English as a Second Language	7	27	34	98
Head Start	13	0	27	9
Special Education	4	69	44	43
TAKS Scores	7	35	44	68
Economic Domain (6 Indicators)	10	51	58	48
Poverty	6	63	51	53
CHIP Enrollments	4	58	45	55
Food Stamps	11	28	58	37
TANF	12	48	67	33
WIC	9	58	68	56
Medicaid	7	52	54	51
Health Domain (5 Indicators)	9	60	70	63
Pregnancy	9	56	66	61
Births	12	60	35	49
Abortions	9	68	76	72
Infant Mortality	11	70	83	68
Low Birth Weight	5	48	44	48
Safety Domain (5 Indicators)	11	62	77	82
Foster Care	9	33	54	75
Shelters	11	28	80	72
Teen Violent Deaths	8	76	72	88
Child Deaths	12	87	91	82
Child Abuse	8	88	83	93

Pathways to Progress

To enable comparison of the Concho Valley counties with one another and with the state, we use a 100-point scale to score each county and the state as a whole. We computed a score for each of the four aspects of child well-being and a total score reflects a county's (or the state's) outcomes on all 21 CSHI indicators. Higher scores indicate better conditions for the well-being of children.

The chart is a snapshot of scores from the 2011 edition of the CSHI. To the left of the chart, the indicators represent each of the four aspects of child well-being covered in the study. The right side compares the scores for Tom Green County, the average of the scores for the 12 other Concho Valley counties, and the scores for Texas overall.

Figure 23: A Snapshot of Scores for 2011 CSHI



The chart does not paint a pretty picture for Tom Green County. On average, the 12 outlying counties of the Concho Valley show better conditions for all aspects of the well-being of children. In addition, the statewide scores are better than Tom Green County in all the areas of child well-being except the economic dimension.

Connecting the dots, the Kids Count data show that Texas falters in comparison with other states. The CSHI shows a local community that fades within a faltering state when it comes to underwriting the well-being of children. Bob Dylan wrote the lyric for this, “It’s not dark yet, but it’s getting there.”

To be sure, Tom Green County has bright spots where significant progress occurred to improve the well-being of children. For example, High School Attrition in the county has declined by 79 percent over the past decade. In the same period, births to teen mothers fell by 73 percent, and infant mortality fell by 49 percent.

Still, there are many other areas where the local community is stumbling and the vulnerability of children multiplied. While more than 22 percent of Tom Green County’s children live in poverty, the county decreased funded Head Start slots by six percent over the past decade. While the percentage of children receiving Food Stamps increased by 146 percent since the beginning of the decade, enrollment in Children Health Insurance Programs declined by 17 percent, and the number of students in all grades that receive special education services fell by about 25 percent. While only 26 of 254 Texas counties have a higher number of child abuse victims than Tom

Pathways to Progress

Green County, the number of children in family violence shelters and foster care increases consistently, and the violent death rate for teens in Tom Green County grew by almost 377 percent during the past decade. These are some of the reasons for the poor child well-being county scores.

Of course, there are local organizations that do heroic things throughout the calendar year to help uplift children. The San Angelo/Tom Green County Hunger Initiative organized volunteers to provide more than 26,000 meals to children and their parents or caregivers this past summer. The Concho Valley CARES Drug Free Communities Coalition is reaching out to numerous school and faith-based student organizations to enlist their leadership in steering young people across the region away from the destructive consequences of excessive underage drinking and substance abuse. House of Faith counsels, mentors, and tutors with thousands of local children and families on a year-around basis, and the Children's Advocacy Center strives to prevent child abuse and is dedicated to assuring that every child has a nurturing home. These are only some of the many community assets we have to secure the well-being of children. Yet the outcomes keep slipping away.

Therefore, happy holidays residents of San Angelo! This season, help make sure that Santa widens the eyes and fills the Christmas stocking of every child. Pray for the well-being of all families and children in our community.

However, on New Year's Day, make a resolution. Let us resolve that at tax time, in the voting booth, and with our charitable time and dollars, we will do our part to make sure the schools are up to educating all the children. Additionally, let us ensure that every child receives health and mental-health care, that every child has a safe and healthy home, and that every family earns a living wage enough to provide for the children.

Next holiday season, let us celebrate evidence of our progress toward showing that Kids Count in the Concho Valley.

[Table of Contents](#)

Battle against Child Poverty Goes On

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

April 4, 2012

Arthur Wright wanted his children to get a strong education and to serve others. As he met with them each night in study sessions and required them to perform community-service, he possibly never anticipated his daughter Marian Wright Edelman's emergence as a preeminent advocate for children's rights.

Edelman's advocacy position is clearly stated, "A nation that does not stand up for its children does not stand for anything and will not stand strong in the twenty-first century." She clearly "threw down the gauntlet" by challenging communities to take steps to enhance their children's well-being.

In 1973 when she created the Children's Defense Fund, Edelman's passion could have focused on improving the lives of children in third world countries. However, it was not kids in Africa, Latin America, Asia, or the Middle East that Edelman thought of defending. Instead, she had the vulnerable children of America in mind.

Edelman knew then that millions of children in the wealthiest nation on earth did not get the head start in life they need to fulfill their potential. Then, as now, the US lagged behind other developed nations with its high infant mortality rate and high number of children in poverty. Recent evidence says that some things have changed since 1973; others have stayed the same.

Families, of course, have changed a great deal since 1973. A most significant modification is that the rate of working women in the US shot above 60 percent and now stays at levels that are higher than average even for the most developed nations.

What has not changed is the level of child poverty. The US child poverty rate of 21.6 percent in 2010 places the nation near the top of the list of advanced countries on that measure, just as it was in the 1970s when Edelman founded the Children's Defense Fund. Nowadays, though, a growing number of children in poverty live in female-headed families -- most headed by working women -- where the nation has a shameful poverty rate of 40 percent.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an international consortium of advanced nations that recently completed a major study comparing families and children in different countries, sees the US as one of a growing number of places struggling to design family benefits "to maintain work incentives" while compromising effectiveness "in protecting the most vulnerable." This compromise, the study claims, runs the risk of "creating high, long-term social costs for future generations."

What should pique local interest in this topic is that Texas has worse numbers on family and child poverty than our lagging nation, and Tom Green comes out worse than Texas. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2011 National Kids Count Data Book continues to rank Texas in the bottom third of states in an annual state-by-state study of children's welfare. In the Kids Count results, only four states have higher levels of children living in poverty than the 26 percent rate for

Pathways to Progress

Texas. Nearly 1.8 million Texas children lived in poverty during 2010, a 24 percent increase over the first decade of the 21st century.

Unfortunately, Tom Green County's rate exceeds the state level of child poverty. Twenty-eight percent of Tom Green County's children lived in poverty in 2010 compared to the state's 26 percent. Moreover, 44 percent of the counties female-headed families with children were in poverty compared to the state's 42 percent and a nationwide 40 percent.

Most of us recognize that helping children overcome poverty makes a huge difference to their lives, to their families, their communities, and to society as a whole. Fewer people seem to grasp that solving child poverty means tackling a wide range of complex issues to empower all types (not just some preferred types) of families to move out of poverty for good.

It is too easy for some amongst us to leap to quick conclusions that child poverty traces back to irresponsible parents who prefer welfare to work. More than a decade has passed, however, since governments reformed policies from the national to the local level to stimulate work over welfare. The result has been a 72 percent drop in the percentage of local children receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families since the year 2000, a 17 percent decrease in the number of children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program, and a five percent decline in participation in the Women, Infants, and Children program.

Fact is that the vast majority of poor children have one or more parents who work. The issue is less about welfare dependency and more about low wages and unstable employment leaving families struggling to make ends meet.

Race is also a factor, along with levels of parental education. In Tom Green County 16 percent of white children are impoverished, while the percentage is 28 percent for Hispanic and African American children. More than 60 percent of children in San Angelo's public schools come from low-income households; while over 66 percent of the heads of impoverished families have only a high school diploma at best.

Increases in the number of poor children and families in the stormy economy of recent years stimulated demand for certain basic "safety-net" social services at the local, as well as the state and national level. One example is the 26 percent increase in food stamp enrollments in Tom Green County since 2007, just before the economic storm started.

Fatefully, rising public expense for the social safety net generates shrill calls for austerity and reduced taxation, along with brooding claims about pending economic and national ruin. Thusly, the struggle to manipulate safety-net policies providing family benefits so that an allegedly dependent poverty class gets a stronger work incentive is set into motion.

Meanwhile, the compromise of all effective means for protecting the most vulnerable of us takes form. A heavier burden falls on the strained network of local private charities and agencies already struggling because of inadequate funding and staffing shortages. Local public programs and institutions designed to support families in everything from health to housing to education and training have had to cut, reduce, or withhold critical assistance to needy families.

Our community has a myriad of talented local individuals and strong institutions trying to help. Lifting children from poverty, however, is not a result of austerity cuts to public spending trying

Pathways to Progress

to teach poor folks about the need to work. Instead, the safety net for children and families is in need of enhancement so that it can actually lift people up, rather than being merely a desperate effort to prevent a fall.

South African leader and liberator Nelson Mandela notes, “There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.” It is up to us to pick up the gauntlet thrown by Marian Wright Edelman to ensure that we stand up for children in poverty.

[Table of Contents](#)

Pathways to Progress

Child Abuse in our Area

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

May 2, 2012

Violence involving young people is shocking. Dramatic cases regularly populate the national media like the senseless shooting death of a teen in Sanford, Florida or the suicide of a gay Rutgers student after finding that his roommate used a webcam to watch his gay liaisons.

Occasionally a case of violence involving youth turns into a saga of survival and empowerment like the inspirational kidnapping story of Elizabeth Smart that riveted a sell-out audience at San Angelo's "Day of the Woman" event last month. Charismatic as that story is, however, instances where child victims of violent acts become celebrities leading popular causes to ensure child safety are very rare. Much more often, these events lead to wrecked lives.

While keen awareness and fervor goes out to famous cases in other places like those involving Trayvon Martin, Tyler Clementi, and Elizabeth Smart, young people in the local community face a threat-level of violence that is stunning. In 2011, for example, Texas Child Protective Services investigated 297,971 alleged instances of child abuse across Texas and confirmed 65,948 allegations.

Tom Green County contributed more than its share to this picture. The county's 26,373 children comprised only about four of every 1,000 children living in the state. Yet the county's 1,596 alleged victims of child abuse made up slightly less than six of every 1,000 accusations across the state.

The lowest child abuse rate for Tom Green County over the past decade occurred in 2004 when the rate was 6.4 confirmed cases per 1,000 children. The high rate of 20 confirmed cases per 1,000 children was in 2010.

The local rate of child abuse has increased by 56 percent since the year 2000. This compares to an increase of just 19 percent for all of Texas. The local community also usually registers higher rates than the state for incidents of violent death of teenagers, family violence, and for abuse of disabled and elder persons. San Angelo and Tom Green County, in short, is a violent place for kids and families despite any pretensions to the contrary.

Local families, children, and the community-at-large are paying for the extraordinary violence. For instance, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services' places many abused children in foster care. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of children under 18 in foster care increased by more than 194 percent in Tom Green County compared to an increase of just over 21 percent for Texas. Only 14 Texas counties had a higher number of children in foster care than Tom Green County in 2011.

Studies show that children in foster care have a higher probability of having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, anxiety, and other developmental problems. Once leaving foster care, many young adults also experience higher degrees of incarceration, poverty, homelessness, and suicide. These may be some reasons why the Annie E. Laurence Foundation's projects to help vulnerable kids succeed classify foster care as a "safety and risky behavior" issue.

Pathways to Progress

Some child abuse victims may also find themselves in family violence shelters. There was a consistent increase in the number of Tom Green County children living in family violence shelters from 2000 through 2006. In 2007, the latest year of available data, the rate significantly decreased by 38 percent. Still, only 24 Texas counties had a higher placement rate into family violence shelters than Tom Green County in 2007.

Accompanying the startling facts on violence and local youth are an astonishing number of local programs and agencies with missions to protect and aid the development of children and their families.

Many churches and faith-based organizations have special youth and family ministries and missions, most public social services have a focus on families and children, and the majority of non-profits are family and child centered.

Most of these local entities do marvelous things. Just a few local places where heroic actions occur daily include the Children's Advocacy Center's Family Enrichment Services to improve parenting and prevent child abuse, the House of Faith programs for positive youth development, and the Concho Valley CARES Coalition's activities to reduce youth substance abuse. Efforts are now underway to add Elizabeth Smart's personally endorsed safety education and anti-bullying radKIDS program to the long list of local initiatives tackling one piece or another of the youth and violence picture.

As the list of programs grows, however, someone must seriously ask why the big picture is not also improving. After all, the numbers show that this community is a risky place for young people and adding one more new program, no matter how much glitter surrounds it, is unlikely to dent the dangers.

In fact, shining starlight on narrow aspects of preventing violence involving children can have the ironic effect of diverting attention from the violent nature of the community toward a perception that the problem boils down to performing a few common sense techniques of self-protection against a small number of ruthless perverts malingering somewhere in the shadows.

Truth is that there are many moving parts to the violence surrounding young people. It has the face of poverty; it involves drug and alcohol abuse; ineffective parenting is part of it; racial tension and intolerance of social differences impinges; insular and inept social programs and services aggravate the situation; legal and law enforcement issues impose; and the politics of public funding and taxation is onerous.

Programs for family enrichment, reduction of substance abuse, positive youth development, and safety education can all help, but the help diminishes in a community thinking that the problem will ease if we contain a malicious few in the population. Former First Lady, Senator, and now Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave insight by noticing, "It takes a village" to raise a child. Now is the time to understand that it also takes a village to keep one safe.

[Table of Contents](#)

It Takes a Village to Raise Kids Right

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

October 3, 2012

More than a century has passed since Frederick Douglass observed, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.” At a momentous time following the Civil War when America first glimpsed the prospect of moving from slavery’s past to freedom’s future, Douglass rightly urged investment in children as a sure pathway to the prize.

The prospect and promise of that same pathway for improving communities is a core reason why we developed the Children of San Angelo Social Health Index (CSHI) at ASUs Community Development Initiatives. Building on the nationally recognized KIDS COUNT project tracking the well-being of children, the CSHI provides timely information focused at the level of San Angelo’s local neighborhoods. The purpose is to enrich community discussions of pathways to a better future and to increase the visibility of evidence-based inspection of children’s issues.

The Index is a detailed and inclusive report card on local children that uses data from the US Census, the Texas Education Agency, and the San Angelo Police Department. Twenty indicators compare the city’s 20 census tract neighborhoods. In addition to a comprehensive comparison, the report details neighborhood differences on factors describing children’s households, income support levels, guardianship arrangements, and qualities of the elementary schools serving the neighborhoods.

The project uses a 100-point scale to indicate how a particular neighborhood is doing compared with other neighborhoods throughout the city. Higher ratings indicate that a neighborhood has a better quality of life for children than other parts of the city.

The summary table depicts the results for the overall CSHI and the four groups of factors covering housing, income supports, guardianship, and education. The shaded areas in the summary table designate neighborhoods that score below the overall city as shown on the bottom row.

The comprehensive result of the Index will not surprise folks who are familiar with the city. It identifies Bentwood–Nasworthy as having the best overall quality of life for children. The Sunset and Bonham neighborhoods followed with scores of 87 and 81 respectively. Rio Vista and Glenmore are middling neighborhoods scoring 47 and 45 respectively on the 100-point scale. The Blackshear–Downtown area had the lowest score of zero.

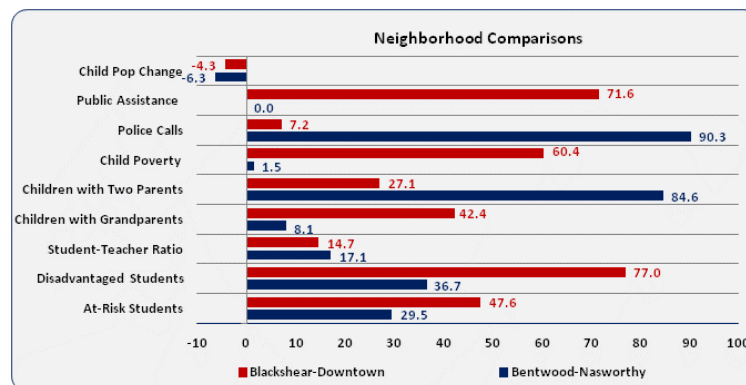
Additional eye-catching results emerge by delving into details that contrast the situation of children living in the highly rated Bentwood-Nasworthy and lesser-ranked Blackshear-Downtown sections of the city. One detail, for example, indicates that the population of children has actually declined more quickly in trendier Bentwood-Nasworthy during the past decade.

Figure 24: Children's Social Health Index Results

Neighborhood by Rank	Tract	Children's Index (20 Indicators)	Index Rank	Housing Indicators (5)	Housing Rank	Income Indicators (5)	Income Rank	Guardian Indicators (5)	Guardian Rank	Education Indicators (5)	Education Rank
Bentwood - Nasworthy	17.08	100	1	100	1	100	1	94	3	88	5
Sunset	13.03	87	2	84	3	63	2	100	1	75	7
Bonham	17.07	81	3	83	4	54	5	93	4	99	2
Bluffs	11.01	70	4	94	2	42	8	72	9	82	6
Santa Rita	10	66	5	63	7	44	7	78	7	89	4
Vista del Arroyo	13.04	64	6	66	5	55	3	50	12	75	7
ASU - College Hills	13.01	63	7	56	8	47	6	80	6	51	10
Southland	17.06	62	8	50	9	55	3	45	14	99	2
Paulann	3	56	9	65	6	31	13	95	2	15	17
Rio Vista	14	47	10	45	11	19	15	60	10	100	1
Glenmore	8.01	45	11	45	11	40	9	49	13	59	9
Ft. Concho	9	45	11	28	17	34	12	75	8	36	11
Lake View	2	41	13	40	15	17	17	89	5	16	16
Central	11.02	39	14	41	14	39	10	23	19	25	12
Riverside	1	38	15	50	9	35	11	28	17	16	16
Reagan	4	29	16	42	13	14	18	58	11	3	19
Fort Concho- East	7	24	17	21	19	18	16	40	15	21	15
Belaire	8.02	24	17	36	16	10	19	39	16	24	13
Angelo Heights	12	20	19	22	18	24	14	28	17	0	20
Blackshear - Downtown	18	0	20	0	20	0	20	0	20	23	14
San Angelo		48		47		33		61		50	

In fact, the Bluffs and Paulann neighborhoods lead a list of only six out of 20 San Angelo neighborhoods that experienced increased numbers of children residing within their boundaries. Out of the remaining 14 neighborhoods, Blackshear-Downtown's 4.3 percent decrease was among the areas losing children in the population at the slowest pace. The pace of decline in Bentwood-Nasworthy was average for neighborhoods where the child population is waning.

Figure 25: CHSI Neighborhood Comparisons



Other facts contrasting Bentwood-Nasworthy from Blackshear-Downtown show just how much the more than 1,200 children in Bentwood-Nasworthy live in a different world from the 650 or so kids in Blackshear-Downtown. Virtually no children in the Bentwood-Nasworthy, for instance, live in households that relied on some type of public assistance such as Supplemental Security Income or food assistance in 2010.

Conversely, a little more than seven in ten households in the Blackshear-Downtown neighborhood received such support. The Blackshear-Downtown neighborhood's 60.4 percent child poverty rate is 40 times greater than in the Bentwood-Nasworthy section with a 1.5 percent rate. Poverty, and the injuring experiences that go with it, separate the worlds of San Angelo's children.

Safety and security is another difference that separates those worlds. An indicator of this is the number of police calls involving family violence or other child-related disturbances in of various city neighborhoods. Local police records show an annual rate of one child-related police call in

Pathways to Progress

the Blackshear-Downtown area for every 7.2 children residing there. The same rate for Bentwood-Nasworthy is one call for every 90.3 children. By this measure, kids in Blackshear-Downtown are about 13 times less safe and secure than children with the good fortune to live in Bentwood-Nasworthy.

Children in San Angelo neighborhoods also experience very different families and households. Almost 85 percent of the families with children in Bentwood-Nasworthy have two parents present. In Blackshear-Downtown, only 27 percent have both parents. There are increasing numbers of grandparents that are encountering situations necessitating the need for them to care for their grandchildren in most city neighborhoods. . In Bentwood-Nasworthy, however, only eight percent of kids live with grandparents. In the Blackshear-Downtown area, more than 42 percent of the children live with a grandparent, and about eight of every 10 of those grandparents have guardianship responsibilities.

Neighborhood schools reflect the separate worlds of San Angelo's kids too. In the elementary schools that Blackshear-Downtown children attend, for example, 77 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged with 48 percent officially classified as "at-risk" of failing to complete a high school education. In the other world of schools serving Bentwood-Nasworthy, only 37 percent of elementary students are economically disadvantaged and 30 percent are at-risk.

It is good news that San Angelo ISD started the long and hard work of melting away the gaps that separate the worlds of the city's children. Important school infrastructure investments in recent years have renewed and revitalized school facilities serving Downtown-Blackshear and other city neighborhoods that are less privileged than Bentwood-Nasworthy.

Beyond the bricks and mortar, moreover, the district has moved to make some of the needed investments in people to close the gaps between the separate worlds of San Angelo children. One indicator of this is the low student-to-teacher ratio of 14.7 for the elementary schools serving the Downtown-Blackshear neighborhood compared to a higher 17.1 ratio for Bentwood-Nasworthy schools. In fact, it is true at this time that elementary schools serving the most vulnerable children across the city have the lower teacher-to-student ratios in the district.

These, and other significant efforts by the school district to address the gaps that separate the worlds of local children, are still not enough. However, we may have discovered a key to resolving the problem.

There is a famous saying that is attributed to an obscure author from ages ago named Stacia Tauscher. To paraphrase, the saying reminds us that while we worry about what a child will become tomorrow, we should not forget that the child is someone today.

San Angelo ISD has begun to focus on that "someone today," but the district cannot do it all alone. The rest of the community must get on-board to help.

[Table of Contents](#)

Children Are All of Our Future

*Laurence F. Jones, Kenneth L. Stewart, and Susan McLane
July 21, 2013*

Lisbeth Schorr was leader of a special national study group, The Select Panel for the Promotion of Child Health, in the early 1980s. The group produced a well-documented multi-volume report aimed at opening new pathways for children's health through a combination of recommended changes in healthcare and new supports to strengthen parenting and families. The Panel highlighted the urgency of developing new pathways by appropriately observing, "Children are one-third of our population and all of our future."

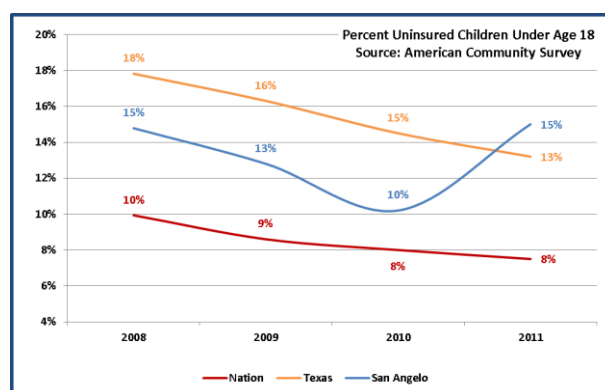
Lisbeth Schorr went on to become a leading advocate of results-oriented programs for child well-being. Many initiatives now supported by the likes of the Annie E. Laurence and W.K. Kellogg Foundations to find out "what works" in reaching goals such as school readiness or prevention of child abuse carry the distinguishing marks of Schorr's leadership.

One especially relevant project seeking a "what works" approach is the Annie E. Laurence Foundation's KIDS COUNT initiative that provides high-quality trend data on child well-being. The objective is to stimulate local, state, and national discussions about pathways toward better futures for all children.

KIDS COUNT released its annual 2013 data book in June. Texas ranks 42nd, an improvement from its prior-year 44th rank, but still placing it among the 10 worst states for kids. That fact alone should be enough to convince Texans that we live in one of the states with the most upside potential to benefit from investing in new evidence-based pathways to promote the health and well-being of children.

In fact, there is no lack of opportunity to do exactly that. For instance, the most recent American Community Survey data from the Census Bureau shows 13 percent of Texas children with no health insurance in 2011. This number represents the kind of improvement we want to see in comparison to the state's 18 percent level in 2008, which was the year when the national debate on health care reform started heating up in the presidential election.

Figure 26: Percent Uninsured Children Under Age 18



Pathways to Progress

Still, with 13 percent of children with no health insurance in 2011, Texas ranks 48th among the states on this KIDS COUNT factor. Opportunity knocks beginning October 1 this year when Texas families lacking health insurance begin signing up for coverage to take effect in January with implementation of the new Health Insurance Marketplaces under the Affordable Care Act.

Compared to the overall state, San Angelo may have even greater upside potential. For three of the four years between 2008 and 2011, the city's rate for uninsured children under the age of 18 was showing a progressive downward trend at levels that were three-to-five percentage points better than the state's progress toward reducing uninsured children. Then, in 2011, the city's rate spiked, shooting the percent of uninsured children up to 15 percent, or two percentage points higher than the state's 13 percent.

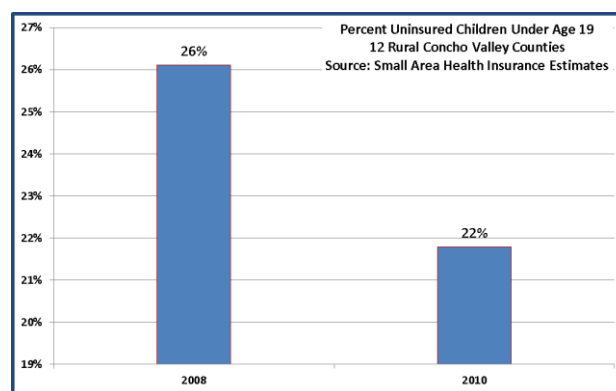
In all honesty, it is possible that the spike in the local rate of uninsured kids for 2011 is a result of Census Bureau methods for making estimates and not an actual change in the community. In that case, the expectation will be for data applying to subsequent years (2012, 2013, etc.) to return to the previous trend of San Angelo progressing better than the state as new data is published.

On the other hand, recent years in San Angelo have been dynamic. The community, like the state and nation, has passed through an economic recession and it now faces major shifts in local activity associated with the oil and gas exploration of the Cline Shale. At the same time, local employers -- along with health care providers and families -- are anticipating and adjusting to pending reforms in the health and insurance industries.

Given these dynamics, it is possible that real mounting pressures on local families are pushing the rate of uninsured children in an upward direction. In this scenario, the new Health Insurance Marketplaces could mitigate some very negative consequences of a potentially growing rate of uninsured children in the city.

Obtaining valid estimates on health insurance for San Angelo's outlying rural areas is a challenging task in itself because of sparse population. The highest quality public set of data covering a recent multi-year time span are from the Census Bureau's Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE). (See below chart for the SAHIE data on uninsured children under age 19 for the 12 rural Concho Valley counties).

Figure 27: Percent Uninsured Children for Concho Valley Counties



Pathways to Progress

The 12 outlying counties that are included in the Concho Valley Council of Governments region are Coke, Concho, Crockett, Irion, Kimble, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Reagan, Schleicher, Sterling, and Sutton. SAHIE data on these counties differ from the previous American Community Survey data for San Angelo in certain ways.

First, SAHIE includes individuals under age 19, whereas the San Angelo data applies to those under age 18, so there is a 1 year difference in the definition of “children” in the two data sets. In addition, the publication schedule for Census Bureau’s SAHIE lags behind the American Community Survey information for San Angelo by 1 year, so the latest available SAHIE data is for 2010.

Nevertheless, SAHIE data representing the combined population of children under age 19 in the outlying Concho Valley counties demonstrate even greater upside opportunity for rural families and communities to benefit from opening the Health Insurance Marketplaces this fall.

To be sure, the outlying counties – like the nation, the state, and the city -- made progress between 2008 and 2010 by reducing their rate of uninsured children from 26 to 22 percent. At the same time, however, the outlying rural areas of the Concho Valley face the challenge of especially high levels of uninsured children. The 22 percent rate in the rural counties during 2010, for example, compares to substantially lower rates that year for San Angelo, Texas, and the nation.

Neil Postman, the popular media and education critic of the 1980s, once noted, “Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.” Anyone who really understands this knows the importance of healthy kids. We know a lot about what works for healthy kids, there is no doubt that insurance and access for every child is one of the keys. This coming fall, we can send many messages “to a time we will not see.”

[Table of Contents](#)

How Are the Children?

Michelle Hanby, Kenneth L. Stewart, and Jeffrey Goodman
January 2, 2014

It has been our pride for more than two years to share Pathways to Progress each month with the San Angelo community. At least five articles in the series have focused directly on children. We explored the city's inordinately high levels of child poverty and child abuse, as well as the need for better access to health care for local children.

One previous column (October 2012) reviewed the original results of the Children of San Angelo Social Health Index produced by Community Development Initiatives at ASU. Now, with a New Year and new opportunities dawning, we revisit the children's index with updated findings.

We created the Children of San Angelo Social Health Index to gauge the well-being of children in different San Angelo neighborhoods. The project compiles relevant data from the U.S. Census, the Texas Education Agency, and the San Angelo Police Department into "report cards" for each of the city's 20 census tract neighborhoods.

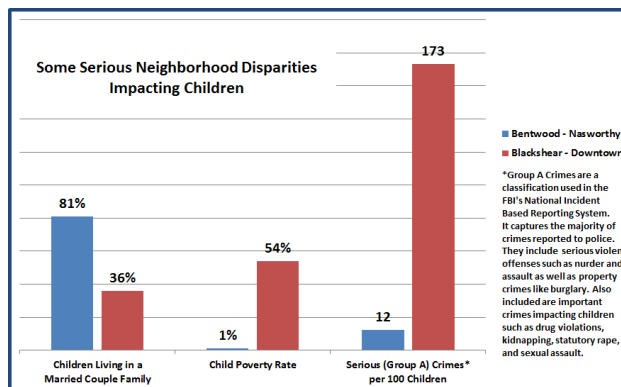
The report cards include 21 indicators that monitor four facets of life that impact children. Six items focus on qualities of the children's neighborhoods and households. The remaining 15 indicators are divided equally (five items each) to measure income support levels, guardianship arrangements, and qualities of elementary schools. The report rates Neighborhoods on a 100-point scale with higher scores indicating better conditions for children. The ratings tell us how each neighborhood is doing compared to the others.

One of the positive effects of San Angelo's recent economic growth is evident in the updated findings. The economic surge has reversed what had been a trend toward a reduced population of children in the city. Specifically, the number of children fell by more than 1,000 between the year 2000 and 2010. This netted a five percent citywide decline in the child population and 14 of the 20 census tract neighborhoods felt the impact of having fewer children in the nest.

Things started changing in 2011 when census estimates indicated a citywide gain of more than 400 children over the 2010 census count. The majority of the neighborhoods shared in the gain with Southland leading the way (23% increase) followed by ASU-College Hills (22% gain) and Glenmore (19% increase). Recently released census estimates for 2012 show continued gains in the population of children. Recent school enrollment figures also reflect the new trend.

In the bright light of opportunity that a vibrant economy stimulates, it is important to keep clear-eyes on serious disparities lingering under the surface. A striking view of some of our community's most serious gaps emerges when comparing the most and least privileged sections of the city in the chart below. Children in these neighborhoods live worlds apart.

Figure 28: Serious Neighborhood Disparities Impacting Children



Census tract 17.08 is an area of the city that stretches from Bentwood Country Club to the south around Lake Nasworthy and then eastward to encompass the San Angelo Country Club area. The Bentwood-Nasworthy neighborhood scored highest on the Children of San Angelo Social Health Index and represents the city's most privileged area.

More than 1,300 kids (about 6% of San Angelo children) live in Bentwood-Nasworthy. Eighty-one percent of them live in households run by a married couple. Their households enjoy a median annual income over \$94,000, which is more than double the median for all households across the city.

Children encounter very few poor people in their neighborhood and rarely experience an instance of police investigating a crime. In the elementary school grades, kids in this area attend schools where about 37 percent of their student peers come from an economically disadvantaged household. About 32 percent of fellow students are “at-risk” of becoming a school dropout.

At the other end of the scale, census tract 18 includes the city's Downtown district and the Blackshear area to the north. Some 535 kids live in Blackshear-Downtown, about 2.4 percent of all the city's children. Life for them is more difficult and more dangerous than in Bentwood-Nasworthy.

Difficulties in Blackshear-Downtown begin with the formation of children's families. Only 36 percent of children live in a household with a married couple compared to 81 percent in Bentwood-Nasworthy. In Blackshear-Downtown, children more often live with a single parent or with grandparents.

Income support in Blackshear-Downtown is much more limited than in Bentwood-Nasworthy. The median annual income of children's households in this part of town is \$23,750, which is about one-quarter of the amount for kid's households in Bentwood-Nasworthy and half the citywide level. The child poverty rate in Blackshear-Downtown is an incredible 54 percent.

The extreme poverty of the area extends to the schools too. Elementary school-age kids in Blackshear-Downtown attend schools where about 77 percent of students are from economically disadvantaged households and half are “at-risk” of dropping out.

Pathways to Progress

Finally, danger hangs in the environment in ways not equaled in the experiences of Bentwood-Nasworthy children. Chances of exposure to a crime in the neighborhood, for example, are about 14 times higher in Blackshear-Downtown. The same is true about the chances of experiencing incidents of family violence.

Some of the city's anchor institutions are well versed in these disparities and are taking needed action. The San Angelo Independent School District, for example, is maintaining a teacher-to-student ratio that is actually lower in the elementary schools serving Blackshear-Downtown (15.7) than those serving Bentwood-Nasworthy (17.2). The level of experience in the teaching workforce is equal in the elementary schools serving the most and least privileged sections of the city. This kind of action, along with recent investments in the physical facilities of elementary schools all across the city, makes steps toward real future progress.

Other anchors are also taking such steps. The City's Community and Housing Support Program, for example, has created dramatic improvements in the quality of housing options in Blackshear-Downtown and other less privileged sections of the community. The Police Department, too, is making important steps to reduce the dangers of crime and violence through its neighborhood-centric community policing actions.

The community is fortunate to have non-profit centers dedicated to uplifting and opening doors for children. The Boys and Girls Club, for example, is there in the neighborhood with the children and families of Blackshear-Downtown every day. House of Faith and other faith-based initiatives are lifting spirits of children and bringing out their better character. ICD Bridges, the Rape Crisis Center, and Children's Advocacy Center work with residents to prevent abuse and violence, and to assuage its pains. The Concho Valley Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council with its CARES Coalition is pushing against substance abuse and working to prevent children from falling prey to its harms.

It is good news that the city has these and other organizations to form a strong infrastructure to take positive steps toward progress for children. A New Year has arrived bubbling with a lively economy and exciting opportunities. Let us connect the dots between our good fortune and closing the gaps between the separate worlds our children.

[Table of Contents](#)

Local Domestic and Child Abuse Levels Too High

Kenneth Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

October 2, 2014

The terrible mishandling of Baltimore Ravens star running back Ray Rice's knockout punch launched a furious early start to the observance of domestic violence awareness month this October. Misguided priorities by the NFL leadership led to incredible misjudgments about Rice's brutal act and touched off a blaze of outrage and indignation in the sports world and beyond.

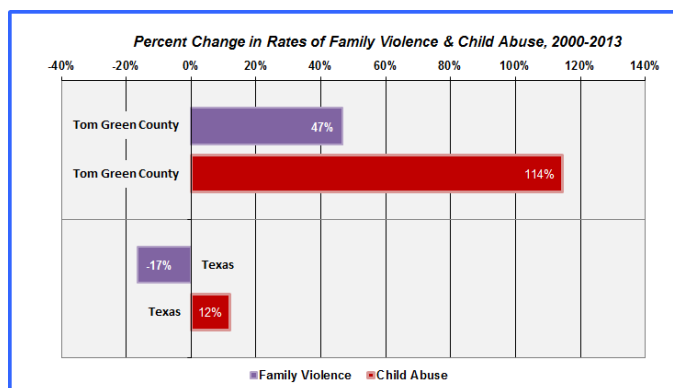
Hopefully, that current animus over NFL stars can help football and other sports to get right on vicious abusive behavior within their ranks. Often, however, national catharsis over misbehavior by celebrities fails to focus attention where need is greatest, on violence in society and most everyone's local community.

Events in San Angelo also sparked an early start to domestic violence awareness month. Five-year-old Naiya Villegas lost her life in a horrific domestic violence occurrence during the first week of September. Shortly after little Naiya's death, some 400 community members held a moving vigil at the County Courthouse in remembrance. Volunteers handed out purple ribbons used traditionally to highlight awareness of domestic violence. The facts about domestic violence and child abuse indicate that we sorely need added awareness and more in our community.

As Crystal Garcia-Ward, president of the Tom Green County Coalition against Violence said in a brief interview with the Standard Times at the assembly, "I can tell you stories about a safe San Angelo. We keep a lot of secrets in our community."

The most recent data from The Texas Department of Public Safety indicates 1,474 incidents of family violence in Tom Green County during 2013. This number translates to a rate of 12.9 instances per 1,000 residents of the county. The statewide rate for 2013 was much lower at seven per thousand Texans.

Figure 29: Percent Change in Rates of Family Violence & Child Abuse 2000-2013



Even more astounding is the fact that family violence in the year 2000 stood at 8.8 incidents per thousand people in Tom Green County. That rate amounts to a 47 percent increase between 2000 and 2013. The statewide rate actually fell by 17 percent during this time.

Pathways to Progress

It is sad enough to see local residents struggle with sharply increasing domestic violence while Texans are generally relieved by reduced levels. Incredibly, however, the facts about child abuse are just as alarming.

Child Protective Services confirmed 483 incidents of child abuse and neglect in Tom Green County during 2013, which are nearly double the 246 cases the CPS confirmed in the year 2000. When we adjust for change in the county's population of children during this time, we find the rate of child abuse increased from 8.4 per 1,000 children in 2000 to 17.9 per thousand 13 years later. Shamefully, the local level of child abuse exploded by 114 percent between 2000 and 2013 while the statewide rate increased by only 12 percent from 8.3 to 9.3 per thousand Texas children.

These facts are a hard pill to swallow for a community that prides itself on being a family friendly environment. Indeed, the 2013 rate of child abuse in Tom Green County far exceeds the levels of abuse found in most of the largest urban centers of Texas such as Harris (Houston), Bexar (San Antonio), Travis (Austin), Tarrant (Ft. Worth), or Dallas counties. Only 52 of the 254 Texas counties had higher child abuse rates in 2013. The majority of them share a common regional location in West Texas with Tom Green County.

Along with current national and local events involving domestic violence and child abuse, the facts are warning us that we need more than purple ribbons and this month of awareness to address the severe abuse problems we have in San Angelo and Tom Green County. No one is doing more than the Tom Green County Coalition Against Violence to move the community in the right direction.

The Coalition members, mostly women, include individuals stretched across the social service agencies, schools and colleges, counseling and recovery professionals, law enforcement and corrections agencies, health and mental health institutions, churches, and business sectors of the community. Together they are creating a movement summoning everyone who cares about domestic violence and child abuse.

Too often, we perceive problems of domestic violence and abuse as "mainly a women's issue," perhaps because the majority of victims (more than 70% in Texas) are female. Nonetheless, anyone connecting the dots between events like those in the NFL and their own hometown knows by now that domestic violence afflicts whole institutions and communities.

It would be tragic for our community to adopt a "women's issue" view and place the bulk of the burden to find solutions on their shoulders only. Given the extent and seriousness of our community's problem, every woman and man needs to take a part in starting to let the secrets out.

[Table of Contents](#)

Saying NO to Citizen Complacency

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

April 2, 2015

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services recently released updates on child abuse or neglect across Texas. The report indicates 583 confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect in Tom Green County for 2014. This number translates to a local rate of child abuse that is more than double the level for the State of Texas as a whole.

Despite such alarming numbers, however, San Angelo citizens have some things to celebrate on the community's accomplishments toward lowering levels of overall violence. The newest update of the West Texas Violence Index produced by Community Development Initiatives at ASU documents the good news, as well as the bad.

The best news is that a previous release of the Violence Index in December of 2013 tagged San Angelo as one of the most dangerous cities when compared with three other West Texas cities that included Abilene, Odessa, and Midland. The current update indicates improvements that now position the city as one of the safest areas of the region.

The West Texas Violence Index compares data for the four cities on violent events that can devastate a community and its people. A distinctive aspect of the Index is that, unlike a snapshot of a crime spree or a rash of accidents, it looks beyond a single type of violence at a specific point-in-time.

Figure 30: Indicators of the West Texas Violence Index

Indicators of the West Texas Violence Index	Abilene (Taylor County)	Midland (Midland County)	Odessa (Ector County)	San Angelo (Tom Green County)
Violent Crime, 2011-2013	82	99	0	96
Family Violence, 2011-2013	16	64	50	18
Sexual Assault, 2011-2013	0	53	72	100
Child Abuse or Neglect, 2011-2013	0	92	89	15
Suicide, 2010-2012	12	66	27	100
Accidental Death, 2010-2012	11	48	27	100
Violence Index Score (Average of Indicator Scores)	20	70	44	72

The Index tracks six indicators of different types of violence over the most recent three-years of available data for each type. The six indicators for the Index are violent crime, family violence, child abuse and neglect, suicide, accidental deaths, and sexual assault.

We use a scoring system at Community Development Initiatives to compare differences between the cities on these indicators. We placed the most recent available data for each type of violence on a 100-point scale with higher scores representing lower rates of occurrence for each indicator.

Then, we use a three-year trend adjustment factor to decrease the score if a city is moving toward more of a given type of violence. The adjustment factor, of course, increases the score for a city if the trend displays less of a type of violence over the three years.

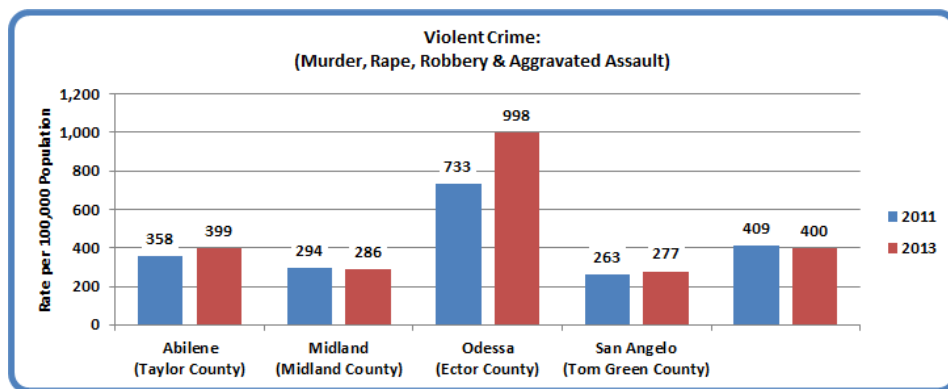
Pathways to Progress

In sum, lower current levels of violence and trends toward decreasing violence drive scores higher in our system. High current levels of violence and increasing trends push the scores lower.

San Angelo's average of 72 for all six indicators identifies the city as the least violent of the four West Texas cities. Midland is close with an average score of 70 followed by Odessa and Abilene. Interestingly, however, the cities differ in terms of the types of violence that are more (and less) prevalent in each locale.

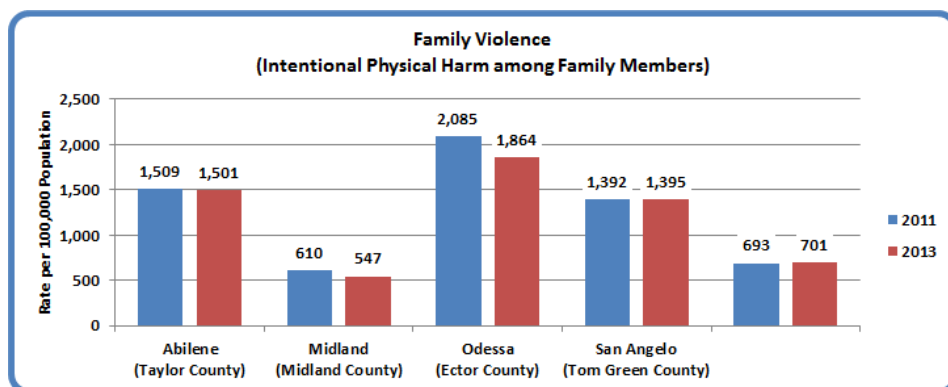
Odessa, for instance, experiences a substantially higher violent crime rate than the other cities. In 2011, Odessa's rate of violent crime was 733 incidents per 100,000 residents. This climbed by 36 percent to 998 per 100,000 in 2013. San Angelo, at 277 violent crimes per 100,000 residents, maintains the lowest violent crime rate of the West Texas cities.

Figure 31: Comparison of Violent Crime Indicators



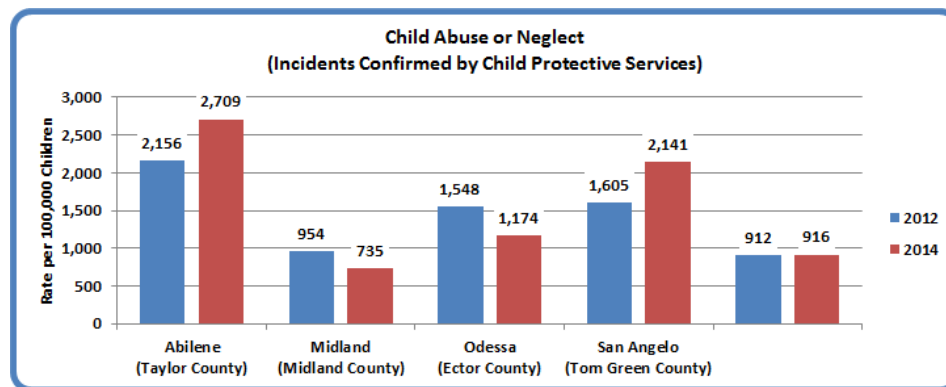
Family violence in Odessa is also higher than in the other three regional cities, but the good news for Odessa is that the rate of violent family incidents fell by 11 percent between 2011 and 2013.

Figure 32: Comparison of Family Violence Indicators



The recent data places Abilene and Taylor County at the top of the four West Texas cities on three different types of violence tracked in the index. The Abilene area registered the highest rates among the four cities on the incidence of suicide, child abuse or neglect, and sexual assault.

Figure 33: Comparison of Child Abuse Indicators



In contrast, San Angelo and Tom Green County had the lowest rates of incidence on four different types of violence. San Angelo had the lowest rate of violent crimes compared to Abilene, Midland, and Odessa. The city also had the lowest death rates resulting from suicide or accidental incidents, and the rate of sexual assault is lower in San Angelo than the other cities.

Figure 34: Comparison of Suicide Indicators

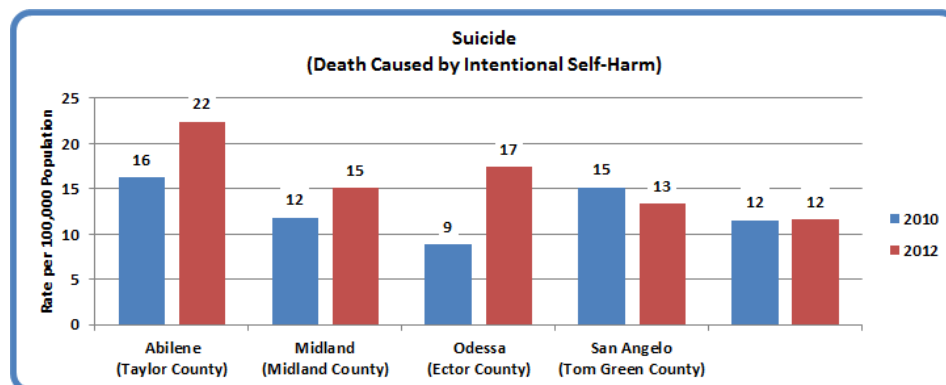


Figure 35: Comparison of Accidental Death Indicators

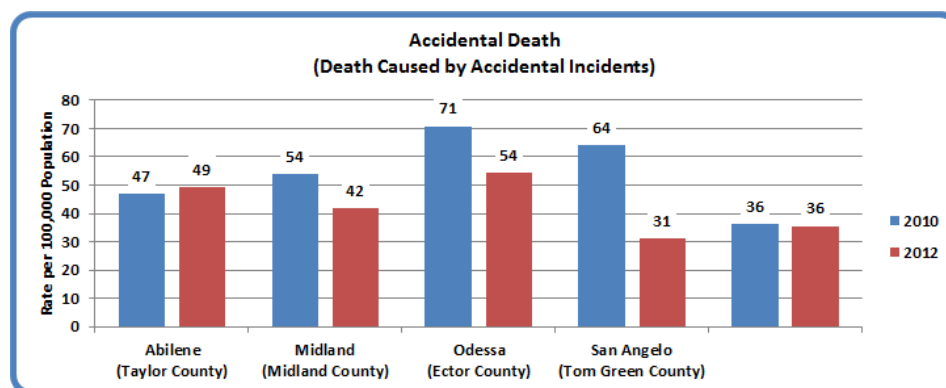
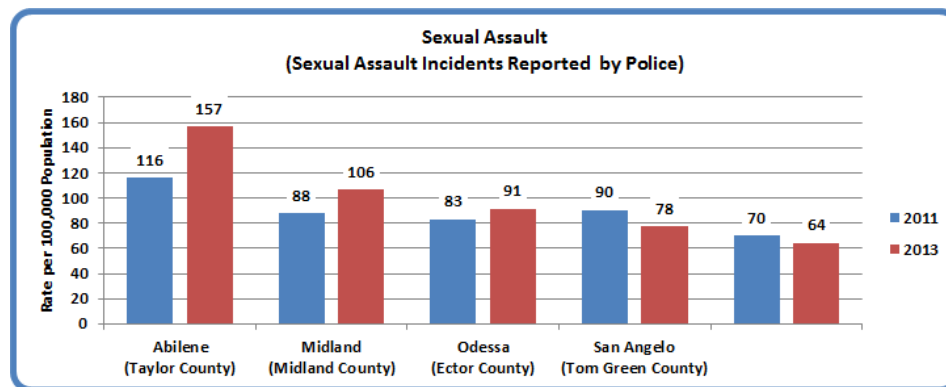


Figure 36: Comparison of Sexual Assault Indicators



A group of local residents recently announced intentions to form a new Concho Valley Citizens Care group to “build a positive support system” for law enforcement. The local community should join with the group and sing praise to law enforcement workers and the many other men and women doing the daily work to guide us toward lower levels of violence.

They include police and sheriff’s officers to be sure, but also judges, lawyers, justices of the peace, counselors, social workers, ministers, mentors, and crisis intervention workers who help us over the rough times to correct our behavior, and sometime deliver due sanctions. The energy the Concho Valley Coalition against Violence brings toward creating awareness of the issues is also moving.

Serving as a panelist at a recent forum on community-police relations, Police Chief Tim Vasquez, noting the good fortune of the relatively low crime rate in the city, cautioned against citizen complacency.

After all, we still live in a community with startling disparities in levels of crime and violence between the central city areas compared to the most privileged outer-loop neighborhoods to the southwest of town. Perhaps the most troubling feature of the violence picture for San Angelo and West Texas, however, is the high level of regional violence compared to the state overall.

One of the four area cities, for instance, has a rate of violent crime that is more than double the level for the state. In addition, three of the regional cities have rates of family violence that are significantly higher. Three regional cities also outpace the state on rates of accidental deaths and on child abuse or neglect. All four-area cities have suicide and sexual assault rates exceeding the statewide benchmark.

Overall, the West Texas Violence Index includes 24 comparisons relating the most recently available data for the four regional cities with the state. The disquieting picture for West Texas is illustrated by the fact that the four area cities display higher levels of violence than the state on 18 (75%) of the 24 comparisons.

Pathways to Progress

Chief Vasquez was on-point with the message on complacency. The time is right to celebrate progress. However, we have much, much more to do toward developing a community that heals the scars created by excessive, unjustifiable violence toward our families and neighbors.

[Table of Contents](#)

Teen Births Cost us All

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

January 7, 2016

Young women 15–19 years old gave birth to 273,105 babies in 2013 according to the most recent data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This equates to a birth rate of 26.5 per 1,000 females in this age group. Thank goodness, the nation's teen birth rate is not soaring; it is at an historic low.

Birth among teenagers in the United States has been falling without interruption since 1991 when it reached a peak of 61.8 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19. Preliminary national vital statistics for 2014 indicate further decline to around 24 per 1,000.

Despite the good news that these falling rates crosscut all areas of the country, an essential part of the national picture is large, persistent differences between the states. In 2013, teen birth ranged from 12.1 per 1,000 in Massachusetts to 43.5 in Arkansas. Massachusetts had reduced its rate by 68 percent since 1991, while Arkansas achieved only a 41 percent reduction.

The Texas rate in 2013 was 41 per 1,000 teens. Uninterrupted declines in Texas amounted to a 47 percent lower rate than the 1991 level of 78 per 1,000.

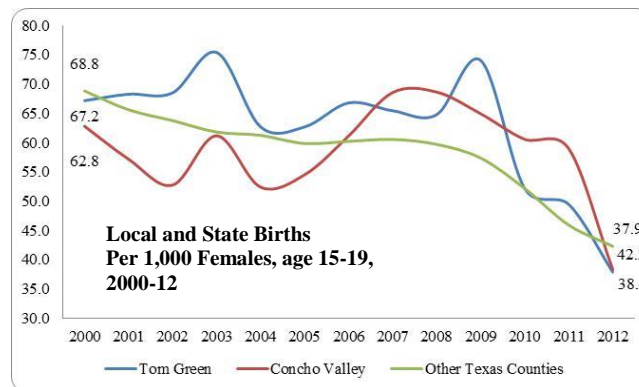
To analyze the local situation, we retrieved data on teen births from the Texas Department of State Health Services. The rates cover the years 2000 – 2012 and enable comparison of Tom Green County with 12 other Concho Valley counties and the rest of the state. (The below graph illustrates this data).

Following the national and statewide trends, Tom Green and the other Concho Valley counties made significant strides lowering teen births between the year 2000 and 2012. The state, as we noted, made continuous declines from year-to-year. Tom Green County and the Concho Valley plunged by 44 and 40 percent respectively between 2000 and 2012.

However, there is something different about local teen birth rates. The decline is not continuous from year-to-year, as in the state and national level trends. In Tom Green County, for instance, the population of 3,741 young women aged, 15-19 in 2009 gave birth to 277 babies.

This yielded a rate of 74 per 1,000 in 2009, hearkening back to 1991 levels. A similar pattern holds in the Concho Valley counties where the teen birth rate hovered above 60 per 1,000 residents for each year between 2006 and 2010.

Figure 37: Local and State Births per 1,000 Females



Despite the progress, though, the social and economic costs of teen childbearing remain staggering. The costs are both immediate and long-term, and the impacts are not limited only to teen parents and their children.

It is true that teen birth contributes to high school dropout rates among girls. Nationwide, only 38 percent of teen mothers under age 18 earn a high school diploma, versus approximately nine of every ten women who did not have a child during adolescence.

The children of teenagers are also more likely to have lower school achievement and not complete high school. The children, too, are more likely to give birth as a teenager. They have more health problems, face high levels of unemployment as young adults, and are more likely as adolescents to face incarceration.

Stories about children of teenagers, who struggle through a ghastly childhood to beat these odds, becoming a successful athlete, or a neurosurgeon and candidate for President of the United States, fascinate everyone.

Struck by the Horatio Alger legend, we imagine and expect that this type of character arc can solve the problem. Then, too often scornfully, we turn away from those who appear to be unwilling to reach for it.

In the local community, however, citizens should be asking if there are better realistic alternatives to the \$23,052 average public cost for each occurrence of birth to a teenage girl. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy estimates that this is the average cost for public services addressing the consequences for families experiencing the negative experiences associated with teen births.

The estimate adds up to more than \$930 million for the 40,424 teen births in Texas during 2012. It totals about \$3.8 million for the 166 births in Tom Green County that year. Meanwhile, the teen moms and their children are frequently left tragically broken in vicious living circumstances with deep, lifelong emotional and psychological trauma.

Yet, there is a reason why the CDC today counts teen pregnancy prevention as one of its top priorities in public health. Not only does it have vital significance to the health and quality of life for youth; it is, in the words of the agency, a “winnable battle.”

Pathways to Progress

The nation's leading public health institution is confident in capacity of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs for changing the lives of youth. Such programs typically address specific factors such as sexual issues like contraception, HIV and other STDs; personal values about sex and abstinence; perceptions of peer norms and sexual behavior; communication with parents and other adults; and avoidance of risk behaviors, places, and situations that lead to sex.

Another thing CDC public health leaders know, however, is that the effectiveness of programs like these is community dependent. That is, all the evidence-based programs in the world are unlikely to succeed without a community that is adamant and active in affirming the health and welfare of its youth.

To have a program that works, a community must provide teens with open access to youth-friendly clinics. Programs must engage parents and other adults to play roles that help their children to make choices about relationships, sex, and birth control. Programs should also shape the important role of adolescent and young adult men in preventing pregnancy while reaching across boundaries that separate, segregate, or isolate those who are poor, vulnerable, and members of minority races, ethnicities, or religions.

These lessons from the CDC are beginning to rub off in some Texas circles. For instance, the State Department of Family and Protective Services, an agency long in need of reform, has begun change in the direction of fostering deeper community engagement in the welfare of children and families. Some locals representing the Coalition against Violence, Workforce Development Board, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council, Children's Advocacy Center, Rape Crisis Center, Legal Aid, and other stakeholders recently began to explore the possibilities.

This is the dawn of a New Year. Let's encourage more of what is right, and what works, for the children.

[Table of Contents](#)

No Reason for Complacency

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence Jones

April 7, 2016

The most recent Texas Department of Family and Protective Services 2015 update indicates 447 confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect in Tom Green County. The good news is that number is down from 583 confirmed cases for the prior year in 2014.

Still, child abuse in the local community continues to track a trend that generally places West Texas cities well above levels of different types of violence found in the State of Texas as a whole.

Indeed, Tom Green County's 447 instances of child abuse computes to a rate of 1,636 cases per 100,000 children in the population. This rate is 79 percent higher than the statewide rate of 912 cases per 100,000 children.

However, Tom Green County does not have the highest level of child abuse among the four urban centers of our region in West Texas. That unfortunate distinction falls to Taylor County and Abilene where the 2015 rate of child abuse reached 2,726 per 100,000 children; about three times the overall level for Texas. Of the four regional cities including Abilene, Midland, Odessa, and San Angelo, only Midland has a rate of child abuse that is below the statewide level.

These results are one finding from the newest update of the West Texas Violence Index produced each year by Community Development Initiatives at ASU. The index compares data for the four cities in our West Texas region on violent events that can potentially devastate a community.

A distinctive aspect of the Index is that it looks beyond a single type of violence at a specific point-in-time, unlike snapshots of the latest crime spree or a sudden rash of accidents. The Index tracks six indicators of different types of violence in the community over the most recent three-years of available data. The six indicators for the Index are violent crime, family violence, child abuse and neglect, suicide, accidental deaths, and sexual assault.

The index uses a scoring system developed by Community Development Initiatives to compare differences between the cities. The scoring begins by placing the most recent available data for each type of violence on a 100-point scale with higher scores representing lower rates of violence.

Then, the scoring uses a three-year trend adjustment to decrease the score if a city is moving toward more of a given type of violence. The adjustment, of course, increases the score for a city if the trend displays less of a type of violence over the three years.

The result is that cities with lower current levels and trends toward decreasing violence get a higher score, while high current violence combined with an increasing trend pushes the score lower.

Pathways to Progress

San Angelo's average score last year on the six types of violence in the index was 72 on the 100-point scale. At that time, the score identified the city as the least violent of the four regional West Texas urban centers.

Although virtually tied with Midland, this year's results place San Angelo among the least violent of the four cities. However, the discouraging news for the local community is that San Angelo's score fell from last year's 72 to 60 points this year.

Changes in four of the six indicators in the index helped bring San Angelo's score down because they point to increased levels violence in the local community. One of the four takes us back to the issue of child abuse.

As noted above, San Angelo and Tom Green County fit the established pattern of West Texas urban areas with higher levels of child abuse than the overall state, but there is more to the story. The local rate is going up according to the most recent data.

Four years ago in 2012, the child abuse rate for Tom Green County was 1,605 per 100,000 children. Three years later in 2015, it reached the rate of 1,636 per 100,000 reported above. This amounts to a 1.9 percent increase over three years.

The trend toward increased child abuse, however, is only one factor reducing the local score on the West Texas Violence Index. Three other types of violence are increasing more rapidly than the level of child abuse.

For the first time in many years, violent crime is on a disturbingly upward trend. The Texas Department of Public Safety reports 250 incidents of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault for Tom Green County and San Angelo in 2011. This computed to violent crime rate of 263 per 100,000 residents. It climbed by 25 percent to 329 per 100,000 by 2014. (See graph below).

Suicide is another type of violence on an upward trend in San Angelo and Tom Green County. There were 14 suicides in the county, amounting to a suicide rate of 12.7 per 100,000 residents in 2010 according vital statistics at the Department of State Health Services. Fast-forwarding three years, the records show a jump to 19 suicides, translating to a 31 percent increase in the suicide rate at 16.6 per 100,000 for 2013.

One more troubling violence trend is growth in numbers of sexual assaults. Department of Public Safety data document 86 sexual assaults in the local community during 2011 and 96 in 2014. The 10 additional events over this three-year period drove the rate of sexual assault up by eight percent from 90.4 per 100,000 local residents in 2011 to 97.5 in 2014. (See graph below).

The way a single dramatic, violent event such as the recent terrorist attack in Brussels can rivet the attention of citizens and summon rash calls for public action is astounding. It becomes a fascinating puzzle. Especially when compared to the blind complacency with which many of the same citizens greet news of escalating patterns of violence in their own neighborhoods and communities.

This, in fact, is the riddle that drew our attention to a recent collection of studies edited by Javier Auyero of the University of Texas, and his associates. The collection, entitled Violence at the

Pathways to Progress

Urban Margins, was part of an effort to counter the tendency to push public discussion about local patterns of violence to what the editors call “the urban margins.”

By this, Auyero and associates mean that too many of us are prone to view the usual skeletons of violence in our own communities as evidence of cultural, racial, or ethnic defects of individuals rather than to raise questions about its relationship to the inequities of the social, economic, and power dynamics churning the community every day.

The authors of the studies in Auyero’s collection show over-and-over that the result of this hat-trick turns the everyday experience of violence, especially when it appears focused in the poor parts of town, into something so unspeakable that the daily trauma and torment of people living in its midst is constantly muted or denied.

True to the message of Auyero’s collection, the principal means to reduce violence in the local community should focus on changing the defects of individual culprits and sometimes the victims. These efforts notoriously meet with heartbreaking recidivism that wears down and burns-out some of the social workers, therapists, police officers and other professionals whose job it is to work the problem.

Perhaps it is true that we need to aid their important work by putting equal fervor into changing the inequities that help drive violence in the local community.

[Table of Contents](#)

Disconnected Youth

*Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones
December 1, 2016*

We wrote in Pathways in the fall of 2011 about a vulnerable group of our city's young adults who failed to achieve a high school diploma and appeared then to be falling through the cracks. New data in PolicyLink's National Equity Atlas stirs us to revisit San Angelo's disconnected youth.

Disconnected youth are people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not working or enrolled in school. PolicyLink's data indicates that an average of 509,451 disconnected youth lived in Texas between 2010 and 2014.

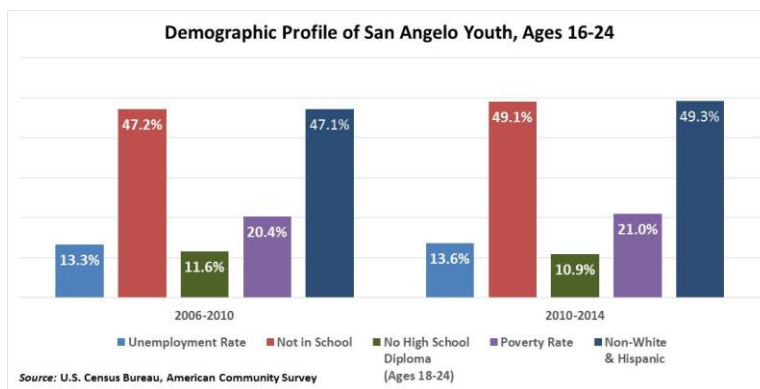
Another data source, the US Census Bureau, indicates that San Angelo's population included an average of 16,259 people in the 16-24 year old age group over these same five years. We estimate that an average of 1,158 formed the disconnected youth of the city.

The same census data provides a profile of the city's young people. It shows that the average unemployment rate among 16-24 year olds in the city was 13.6 percent over the years 2010-2014. The number is more than double the 6.4 percent average rate for all San Angelo workers over those years. In addition, an average of 49.1 percent of the young age group was not in school and nearly 11 percent of those between 18 and 24 had no high school diploma. The poverty rate among the young averaged 21 percent compared to the city's overall 17.4 percent. Members of minority groups comprised an average of 47.2 percent of the city's overall population between 2010 and 2014, but 49.3 percent of the young 16-24 year olds were Hispanic, African-American, and other young minority residents.

Two additional observations involve the stability of the profile over time, as well as its variability across different parts of the city. Census Bureau data going back another 5 years to the 2006-2010 time frame is remarkably similar to the more current profile. Thus, a high unemployment averaging around 13 percent annually seems persistent among young workers in the city. Likewise, it appears that a constant 45-50 percent of 16-24 year olds are not in school and around 10 percent have not completed high school. Hispanics and other minorities are persistently overrepresented in this population, and their average annual rate of poverty has hovered around 20 percent for the past ten years.

The variation in the numbers of disconnected youth across the city's neighborhoods is an even more revealing observation. Nine of San Angelo's 20 residential census tracts are so-called minority-majority neighborhoods. Hispanic, African-American, and other people of color are 65 percent of the residents living in the minority-majority neighborhoods, which include the Reagan area, Blackshear and Downtown, East San Angelo, Fort Concho, Belaire, Angelo Heights, Rio Vista, Lake View, and Paulann.

Figure 38: Demographic Profile of San Angelo Youth, Ages 16-24



These areas combine to make up 47 percent of the city’s total population. About 74 percent of Hispanic, African-American, and other minority youth between the ages of 16 and 24 live in these neighborhoods. On average, over the five years from 2010 to 2014, these adolescents and young adults also made up the majority of the city’s youth not enrolled in schools, which are in the 18-24 age group with no high school diploma, and the 16-24 year olds living in poverty.

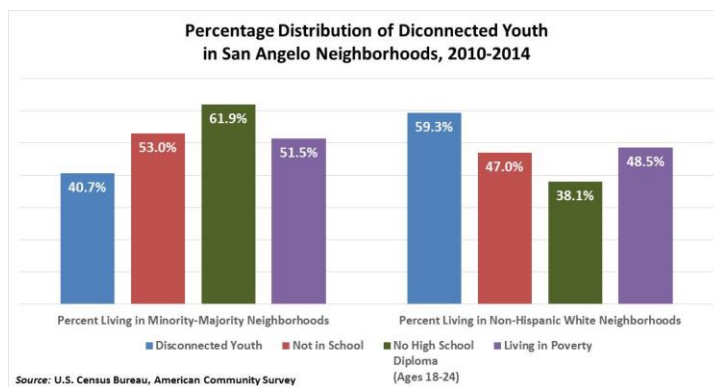
However, the most revealing observation is that the minority-majority neighborhoods are no longer home to the largest numbers of disconnected youth in the city. Our analysis indicates that 59 percent (687) of the estimated average of 1,158 disconnected youth between 2010 and 2014 lived in the 11 census tracts where non-Hispanic white residents are the majority. This pattern represents a reversal from the prior 2006-2010 five-year period when about 56 percent of disconnected youth resided in minority-majority neighborhoods.

In that article back in the fall of 2011, we described the city’s disconnected youth as “a truly vulnerable population of individuals and families in a community that offers them little in the way of a hand up and a pathway out.” Now, the beginning of this holiday season is a worthy occasion to celebrate the progress of San Angelo in addressing the needs of adolescents and young adults striving to gain traction in life.

In recent months, we have highlighted both the challenges and outstanding efforts of the San Angelo Independent School District to provide quality education to students in in our elementary schools. The district also has joined with Howard College to promote a wide range of dual credit courses and strengthen career education options to public school students.

Howard College, in turn, has strengthened partnerships with the Concho Valley Workforce Development Board to open a range of career education pathways to young adults for entry to work in industrial, transportation, and health care jobs, as well as to provide better options for equivalency education to young adults who did not achieve the high school diploma.

Figure 39: Percentage Distribution of Disconnected Youth



For its part, ASU has gone to great lengths to create a friendlier university campus for Hispanic, African-American, and other students representing a diverse array of cultures, interests, and lifestyles. The university is also developing a strong system of student support services to help create new pathways to professional education for growing numbers of students who are the first in their families to pursue a college degree.

The social service sector has also stepped up since 2011. The community's affordable housing coalition, including the City's Neighborhood and Family Services division and the San Angelo Housing Authority, has made strides to ensure that a stock of quality affordable and safe rental options and home purchasing opportunities are available to young adults. Increasingly, organizations like the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council, the Children's Advocacy Center, Concho Valley MHMR, and West Texas Counseling Center are adding, improving, and better coordinating services to help juveniles, young adults, families and others in the community to avoid troubles, as well as adjust and rise beyond when trouble hits.

As academics who simply study data about the local community, we constantly remind ourselves that it is the many fine leaders and rank and file workers in these and other lynchpin organizations that must do the heavy lifting. We are especially thankful this holiday season that they are creating new and better pathways to progress.

[Table of Contents](#)

SENIORS OF THE CONCHO VALLEY

Truly Grand Parents (November 2, 2011): More than 2,500 grandparents in San Angelo are primary caregivers to at least one grandchild, and slightly more than half of these have had this responsibility for three years or more. These data reflect dramatic increases in both the number of grandparents with primary caregiving responsibility and the number of children living with grandparents in our city.

They worked, now it's Up to Us (May 2, 2013): A “tale of two cities” theme appears when estimating housing affordability for seniors in San Angelo’s neighborhoods. In one neighborhood, almost nine of every 10 senior households have manageable housing costs. In another neighborhood, only 66 percent have the same level of manageable housing costs. Too many seniors in this neighborhood find that getting and keeping an affordable residence is a troublesome experience.

City Has High Levels of Elderly Abuse, Accidents (December 5, 2013): San Angelo leads four regional cities on the rate of abuse involving elderly and disabled persons. San Angelo and Tom Green County had 4,287 instances of abuse per 100,000 elder and disabled individuals in 2012. This was 1,122 (or 35%) more than Abilene and Taylor County with the next highest rate.

Texas Should Get atop the Coming Demographic Wave (July 3, 2014): Analysis of Hispanic and non-Hispanic white populations in the San Angelo Metro area shows that local Hispanics are a much younger population compared to non-Hispanic whites. Some 18 percent of whites were seniors age 65 and over as reported in the 2010 Census. This compared to only seven percent of Hispanics.

Not All Seniors Equal (October 1, 2015): 2010 Census data reveals social-economic disparities across San Angelo neighborhoods for senior residents. For instance, poverty rates are higher in some neighborhoods while average retirement income (including social security) is less. In addition, some seniors are about one-third as likely to have a high school education or higher and about 25 percent are as likely to be engaged in the labor force.

Isolation among the Elderly (September 1, 2016): In San Angelo, 8,818 seniors were among the city’s 36,051 householders in 2014. Most important for assessing the risk of social isolation is the fact that more than half (4,799) of the senior householders in the city lived alone. This represents an increase of 9.5 percent over the past five years. In comparison, the 743,872 senior Texans who lived alone in 2014 signaled a 16.8 percent surge over 2010.

[Table of Contents](#)

Truly Grand Parents

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

November 2, 2011

Arthur Kornhaber, founder and president of the Foundation for Grand parenting, movingly notes the obvious, “Every time a child is born, a grandparent is born too.” Driving to the jubilant details, journalist Megan Rutherford wrote, “There is a magical moment in the latter half of life when adults have a chance to reinvent themselves. They take on new names: Nana, Grandma, Bubbeh, Poppy, Grandpa, Zayde. They cast themselves in new roles: caregiver, mentor, pal, and pamperer. They have powerful new emotions that make them feel alive and vital. They become grandparents.”

Jerry and Suzanne Perry are doting grandparents to two very active grandkids who surround them with affection, energy, and joy, while adding purpose to their lives. At the same time, Jerry and Suzanne teach them their core values while providing them with unreserved love -- no strings attached. Most grandparents, however, can send their grandchildren home after an afternoon of frolicking and get on with the things that grandparents do. That is not the case for the Perrys. Their grandchildren live with them and they are very active in raising them.

Jerry and Suzanne are not alone. In 2007, one in 10 San Angelo children lived with a grandparent. More than 3,800 children lived with grandparents by 2009, representing a 65 percent increase over the number from 2007.

More than 2,500 grandparents in the city are primary caregivers to at least one grandchild, and slightly more than half (50.2%) of these have had this responsibility for three years or more. There are dramatic increases in both the number of grandparents with primary caregiving responsibility and the number of children living with grandparents in our city.

National surveys reflect that grandparents raise and nurture their grandchildren for a variety of reasons including the death of a parent or a military deployment. Many care for grandchildren while their own children are looking for another job or undergoing career retraining. Grandparents also become primarily responsible because parents are physically, emotionally, or financially unable to look after their children. Grandparents sometimes represent the only stable environment available for children.

Whatever the reason, the Perry’s and other grandparents, are often willing to take on the responsibility. They take their grandchildren to school, wait in a pediatric dentist’s office, and attend school sporting events. These involvements confirm the evolving role grandparents play in the daily lives of their grandchildren. However, these changes do not come without some detrimental consequences.

Grandparent providers, especially older grandparents living on fixed incomes, did not envision the need to raise another family. They often find financial, health, housing, and work hurdles thwarting hard-earned and long-awaited personal plans.

Pathways to Progress

Economic recession is one of the factors likely to increase the numbers of grandparents taking responsibilities for children. Ironically, the same recession forces severely pinch the income resources of grandparents at the same time. Interest on fixed income investments is low and maintained at meager levels in the current recession and hopes for any modest in social security income benefits are routinely disappointed.

However, the cost of living does not stand still. In San Angelo, for example, the composite cost of living index measured 89.2 in 2007 before the recession onslaught. This meant the local cost of living was about 11 percent below the national average. The 2010 index crept up to 92.4 or about 3 percentage points closer to the national average.

As purchasing power declines, pressures build for grandparents to help with grandchildren. Grandparents respond, sometimes by compromising their own health and nutrition needs and by turning to food stamps, housing and utility bill subsidies, and charities. Some re-enter the workforce as evidenced by a 43 percent increase between 2007 and 2009 in the number of local grandparents in the workforce, even as unemployment was rising

The data amplify the need for additional resources that enable a growing number of vulnerable grand-families to provide effectively for children while maintaining their own security. Concerned citizens in our community took exploratory steps in 2007 when a small group of individuals met to discuss ways to strengthen grand-families. Regrettably, a sustainable coalition did not emerge.

The local Area Agency on Aging of the Concho Valley tried to fill the gap for a while. Sponsored by the Concho Valley Council of Governments, the agency used Title III funding under the Older Americans Act of 1965 and the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services to address some of the needs of older people and their caregivers. This was a noteworthy endeavor, but the Area Agency on Aging no longer provides an effective program to help empower the city's grand-families.

Many states and communities across the country have a variety of caregiver support programs for families in place. State health departments and area agencies on aging are the base for some programs. Others operate from universities, rural extension services, churches, and various family service missioned non-profits.

For its part, Texas appears to center its efforts on connecting grandparents to fee-for-service home health care companies and retirement community projects chalked with golf course and dining club amenities. Struggling grand-families are nearly invisible in Texas. It is difficult for any of them (and their numbers are rising, as in San Angelo) to find any resource remotely tailored to their needs.

Yet their needs are fairly well known. They need not to be community pariahs, so emotional and social support is important. Opening access to services is important too, as is training on how to balance the needs of caregiver grandparents with their children's needs in health, nutrition, or financial management. Importantly, there is much need for legal counsel to make complex decisions involving custody, guardianship, medical consent, and powers of attorney that plague caregiving relationships.

Pathways to Progress

There is one entity at ASUs Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development (WED Center) that is seeking to make some traction in this area. The WED Center's Caregiver Research Institute is vigorously seeking to develop a program to allay the immense stress that grandparents and caregivers feel. This is a good step toward the emotional and social support needed.

The truth is, however, that our community needs to resurrect the 2007 initiative to address the needs of our grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. The concerns they noticed in that year are worse and are likely to escalate into the future. An alliance of individuals, groups, and agencies in San Angelo should consider tailoring a model to build the capacities of this very vulnerable group in our community.

[Table of Contents](#)

They worked, now it's Up to Us

*Laurence Jones, Kenneth L. Stewart, and Susan McLane
May 2, 2013*

The Reverend Billy Graham once commented that people throughout his life taught him how to die, but no one ever taught him how to grow old. His comment suggests an obligation shared by each of us to ensure that San Angelo's senior citizens can manage their health and end of life process in a dignified fashion. After all, being a senior and being with seniors can be rewarding. Together, we can learn much about life's tribulations, joys, and values by listening between the generations.

Community Development Initiatives at ASU created the Seniors of San Angelo Social Health Index to help evaluate the quality of life for elders in different San Angelo neighborhoods. The evaluation includes 17 indicators based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey. It includes items describing housing and neighborhood attributes, income and education statistics, social isolation, and custody of grandchildren (guardianship) among elder residents in San Angelo's 20 census tract neighborhoods.

Figure 40: Summary Table for Seniors Social Health Index

Neighborhoods	Census Tract	Seniors Social Health Index (17 Indicators)	Rank	Neighborhood & Housing Indicators (4)	Income & Education Indicators (5)	Social Isolation Indicators (4)	Guardianship Indicators (4)
Sunset	13.03	100	1	100	100	92	99
Vista del Arroyo	13.04	79	2	98	65	60	100
Santa Rita	10	79	3	13	79	85	100
Southland	17.06	68	4	73	97	88	38
Rio Vista	14	56	5	72	60	73	49
Bluffs	11.01	55	6	72	66	95	28
Lake View	2	54	7	66	58	66	53
Paulann	3	50	8	37	50	73	56
Riverside	1	50	9	80	83	95	0
ASU - College Hills	13.01	47	10	57	77	85	13
Bentwood - Nasworthy	17.08	47	11	24	46	100	37
Glenmore	8.01	46	12	22	82	76	24
Belaire	8.02	43	13	8	58	63	48
Central	11.02	42	14	0	48	60	56
Ft. Concho	9	40	15	80	64	10	46
Bonham	17.07	32	16	14	27	67	42
Angelo Heights	12	31	17	9	50	59	28
Fort Concho- East	7	28	18	75	38	54	13
Reagan	4	18	19	8	38	47	15
Blackshear - Downtown	18	0	20	30	0	0	26
San Angelo		45		43	62	69	35

The index uses a 0 to 100 point scale to compare the city's neighborhoods. Higher scores indicate parts of San Angelo where seniors enjoy a higher quality of life.

The summary table for the index gives several interesting bits of information. For starters, the table identifies the Sunset area as the most elder-friendly with a score of 100 based on the 17 indicators. The neighborhood also sets the pace for the quality of neighborhood and housing characteristics, and on the income and education indicators. The high scores for social isolation and guardianship indicate that, compared to other neighborhoods, senior residents in the Sunset area generally enjoy robust opportunities to connect to social activities and that relatively few have assumed any level custodial responsibilities for grandchildren.

Pathways to Progress

While San Angelo experienced an increase in the senior population over the last decade, the year 2011 saw a slight decrease. Ten neighborhoods, paced by the Reagan area, experienced a decline in the percentage of residents who are elderly. Sunset, by contrast, realized a small increase.

The fact that Sunset replaced Santa Rita, last year's top ranked neighborhood for seniors, confirms an observation we made a year ago that the senior population is moving away from the city center neighborhoods to the outlying areas.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Blackshear-Downtown neighborhood repeated this year as the city's lowest scoring neighborhood in terms of the quality of living for seniors. Indeed, a comparison of the two areas – Sunset and Blackshear-Downtown – is like a “tale of two cities.”

To begin, for example, a larger percentage of the Sunset area's total population is seniors (13%) compared to Blackshear-Downtown (10%), but a larger fraction of households in Blackshear-Downtown (38%) has one or more occupants aged 60 or older than in Sunset (26%). This curious detail results from vast differences in family experiences whereby the elders of Sunset more often “age-well” and continue to live with spouses (75%) while more seniors in Blackshear-Downtown (86%) are widowed or divorced.

The neighborhoods also differ a great deal on other basic demographics. For example, more than half of seniors in Blackshear-Downtown are Hispanic, African American, or members of another minority group. Less than three in 10 of Sunset's senior citizens are minorities. Another contrast is that 87 percent of the Sunset seniors attained a high school education compared to only three in ten seniors in the Blackshear-Downtown area.

People see these gaping differences through many lenses depending upon their perspective and interests. Decades ago, however, Americans agreed that markets in local communities should be able – with some stimulation from government – to provide affordable access to adequate and safe housing, healthcare, and other necessities to retired seniors living on the most basic of fixed incomes.

On the housing front, a fundamental criterion used to define affordability is the 30 percent rule. With this rule, a domicile is affordable when housing costs are less than 30 percent of the occupants' household income. As costs exceed the 30 percent level, the less affordable the dwelling is for the occupants.

The “tale of two cities” theme reappears in applying the rule to estimate housing affordability for seniors in San Angelo's neighborhoods. Almost nine of every 10 senior households in Sunset have manageable housing costs that fall below 30 percent of their household income. In Blackshear-Downtown, however, only 66 percent have the same level of manageable housing costs. Too many seniors in this neighborhood find that getting and keeping an affordable residence is a troublesome experience.

Of course, paralleling the affordability of housing are significant income differences between seniors in the two neighborhoods. There are virtually no seniors in the Sunset area with income below the poverty line, for example, but more than four in every 10 Blackshear-Downtown elders live in poverty. The median income for senior households in the Sunset area is more than 25 percent higher than the median for all households in the neighborhood. Conversely, in

Pathways to Progress

Blackshear-Downtown the senior median household income is 35 percent lower than the neighborhood median.

The basic idea of social security is to help preserve the ability of citizens to provide for themselves when faced with old age or disability. A drawback for low income and impoverished residents, however, is that the government bases benefits on lifetime earnings. Consequently, the incomes of elders in the Sunset area are supplemented by social security checks that average 21 percent higher than the average for the city overall. The average check going to seniors in Blackshear-Downtown is more than 33 percent lower than the citywide amount.

Integration of seniors into the mainstream of community life is an important factor for aging-well, while social isolation generates opposite effects. In San Angelo, English proficiency is one obstacle to social integration for some Hispanics and other elders from non-English speaking national origins. The census estimates that every senior resident in the Sunset area is proficient in English. In contrast, nearly 18 percent of Blackshear-Downtown' seniors do not speak English "well."

Living alone with no other household members is another socially isolating factor, and seniors in the Blackshear-Downtown section live alone more often than in the Sunset area by a margin of nearly 54 to 18 percent. Seniors in Blackshear-Downtown are also less likely to have access to a vehicle compared to those living in the Sunset neighborhood.

In San Angelo, over 2,700 grandparents (5.5%) live with their own grandchildren for a variety of reasons. Of that number, almost 36 percent have primary responsibility for raising them and more than 77 percent of these individuals have had this responsibility for one year or more.

A "tale of two cities" surfaces again in this matter. In the Sunset section of town, very few seniors (3.1%) have grandchildren living in the household or have any other guardianship responsibilities. More than twice that fraction (7.9%) of grandparents in the Blackshear-Downtown area live with grandkids and about three of every four of those have had guardianship responsibilities for a year or more. The presence of grandkids in the house, no doubt, adds joy to the lives of many of these grandparents. The burdens of having to assume custody in troubled circumstances also take their toll.

According to the latest U.S. Census estimates, 12,407, or 13.6 percent of San Angelo's population were 65 or older in 2011. By working with the City of San Angelo and with neighborhood organizations, non-profit organizations like Galilee Community Development Corporation and Helping Hands have worked magic in recent years to make real improvements for affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization in the Blackshear-Downtown section. The Downtown San Angelo Association is helping to breathe economic vitality into the area. Numerous other local entities pitch in to provide transportation, social activities, and gathering places for seniors, nutrition and health services, uplifting spiritual experiences, and many other heroic actions to improve the quality of life for elder citizens.

Nonetheless, our community needs to press on with the goal to enhance the quality of life for all elder residents, whether they live in Sunset, Blackshear-Downtown, or some other neighborhood. Seniors deserve adequate housing and income, enhanced links to social activities, and compassionate caregiving in their golden years. Where Billy Graham lamented that no one ever

Pathways to Progress

taught him how to grow old, it befits each of us to take steps to ensure that our community opens pathways for aging-well.

[Table of Contents](#)

City Has High Levels of Elderly Abuse, Accidents

Kenneth L. Stewart

December 5, 2013

San Angelo has the lowest violent crime rate out of the four area West Texas cities including Abilene, Midland, and Odessa. The crime rate, however, does not account for all kinds of violence taking place in communities. When we add-in those other types, San Angelo joins Odessa as one of the two most dangerous places in the region. The newest update of the West Texas Violence Index by Community Development Initiatives at ASU informs this basic picture.

The West Texas Violence Index compares the four area cities of Abilene, Midland, Odessa, and San Angelo on violent events that can devastate a community and its people. A distinctive aspect of the Index is that, unlike a snapshot of a crime spree or a rash of accidents, it looks beyond a particular form of violence at a single point-in-time. The Index tracks six indicators of different types of violence over the most recent three-years of available data for each type. The six indicators for the Index are violent crime, family violence, child abuse or neglect, suicide, accidental deaths, and abuse of elderly and disabled persons.

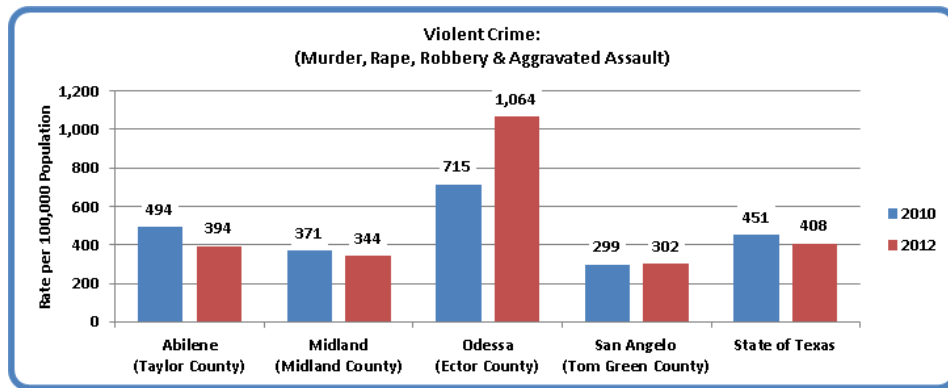
We use a scoring system at Community Development Initiatives as one technique to analyze differences between the cities on the violence indicators. First, we place the most recent available year of data for each six types of violence on a 100-point scale with higher scores representing less violence. Then a three-year trend adjustment factor proportionately decreases the score if a city is moving toward more violence on an indicator. Of course, the city's score will increase by the trend adjustment if it is displaying less violence over three years. A lower level of violence or a trend toward decreasing violence drives scores higher for a city. A high level of violence or an increasing trend pushes scores lower.

Midland averaged 68 on the 100-point scale for all six indicators showing that it represents the least violent of the four West Texas cities. Abilene is next with an average score of 55.

Lower averages of 44 for San Angelo and 40 for Odessa indicate that these are the more dangerous places among the four cities. Interestingly, however, these cities differ in terms of the types of violence that are more prevalent in each.

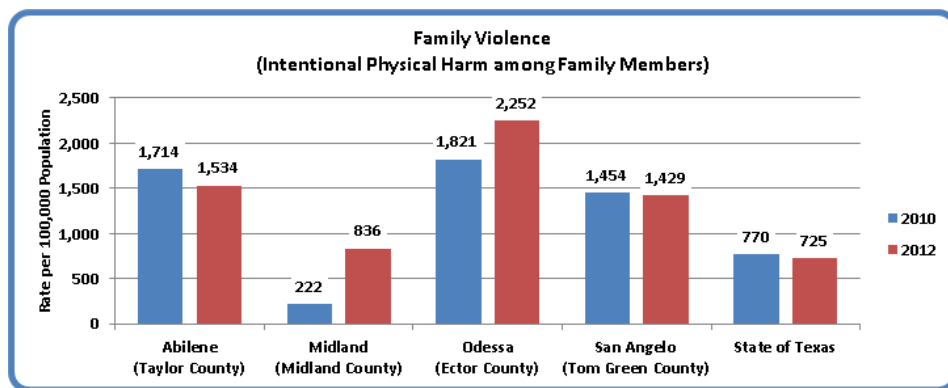
Odessa has a substantially higher violent crime rate challenge compared to the other cities. In 2010, Odessa's rate of violent crime was 715 per 100,000 residents. This climbed by 49 percent to 1,064 per 100,000 in 2012. Even as San Angelo maintains the lowest violent crime rate of the West Texas cities, it was the only other of the four places to see an increase (albeit a minimal increase) of violent crime.

Figure 41: Comparison of Violent Crime Indicators



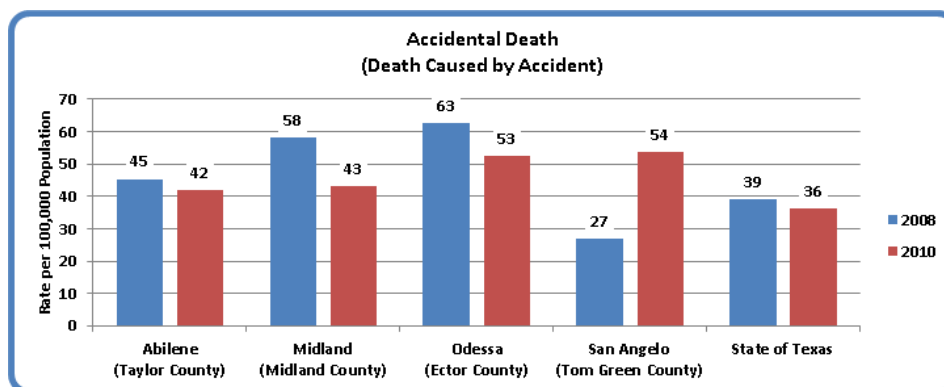
Family violence in Odessa is also high and rising. In 2010, Odessa had 1,821 incidents per 100,000 people. It shot up to 2,252 per 100,000 for 2012. Odessa's family violence rate was 47 percent higher than the next level of 1,534 per 100,000 in Abilene.

Figure 42: Comparison of Family Violence Indicators



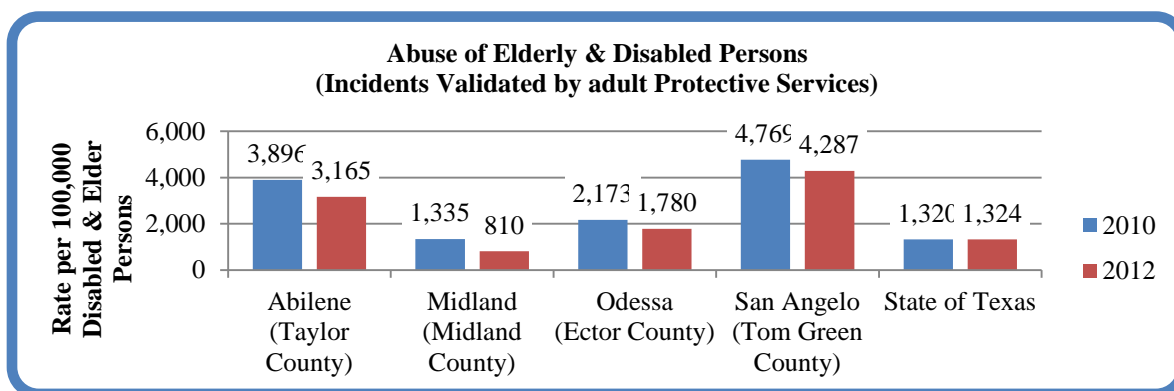
San Angelo leads the four West Texas cities on two different types of violence. In 2010, San Angelo and Tom Green County registered 54 accidental deaths per 100,000 residents. Although this was barely higher than the accidental death rate for Odessa and Ector County, it was a major spike up from the rate of 27 per 100,000 in 2008. Meantime, accidental deaths in Odessa and Ector were falling.

Figure 43: Comparison of Accidental Death Indicators



San Angelo also leads the four cities on the rate of abuse involving elderly and disabled persons. San Angelo and Tom Green County had 4,287 instances of abuse per 100,000 elder and disabled individuals in 2012. This was 1,122 (or 35%) more than Abilene and Taylor County with the next highest rate. The good news about abuse of elderly and disabled persons is a three-year trend toward reduction of this type of violence in all four West Texas cities.

Figure 44: Comparison of Abuse of Elderly & Disabled Persons



Still, the most troubling feature of the picture for West Texas overall is its high level of violence in general. A trained eye will see this in charts comparing area cities with the State of Texas as a whole.

Forty-eight comparisons between the four cities and the state are available in the charts. Half relate to the most recent data for each indicator and the other half compare data from 3 years prior.

The disquieting picture for West Texas is illustrated by the fact that the four area cities present higher levels of violence than the overall state on 34 (71%) of the 48 comparisons in the charts. The number of troubling comparisons for West Texas is proportionately higher (18 or 24 or 75%) if we focus only on the most recent regional and statewide data.

Ironically, the West Texas cities compare most favorably to the state as whole on the most well-known and widely distributed violence indicator, the measure of violent crime produced by the

Pathways to Progress

FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting system. Only one West Texas city, Odessa, had a violent crime rate higher than the statewide level in 2012. By looking at a broader mix of events, however, we learn that West Texas is generally more dangerous than the overall state.

Javier Auyero of the University of Texas at Austin studies the impact of violence on neighborhoods and communities. His work highlights what should concern us about the disturbing levels of violence in West Texas. Understanding the dangers of violence “requires objective measures like counting bodies and injuries,” he writes, “but we also need to understand how constant exposure to violence shapes individual ... worldviews [and] that means listening to those who suffer most – such as children and adolescents.”

Improving neighborhoods or communities where people experience a “constant exposure to violence” is no easy matter, but neither complacency nor fatalism about the potentials offer any solution. Ask Shirley Franklin, a former big-city mayor who – like many other caring civic leaders – wondered what would become of Atlanta's most violent neighborhood.

Then, a philanthropic Atlanta-based land developer came on the scene to lead a public-private coalition to plan a redevelopment effort that would offer residents “an opportunity to thrive.” Today, that most violent Atlanta neighborhood is flourishing with revitalized mixed-income housing options, high-quality cradle-to-college education opportunities for children and families, and a lively assortment of recreational and commercial service anchors.

It is amazing what communities can do when people work together!

[Table of Contents](#)

Texas Should Get Atop the Coming Demographic Wave

Kenneth L. Stewart

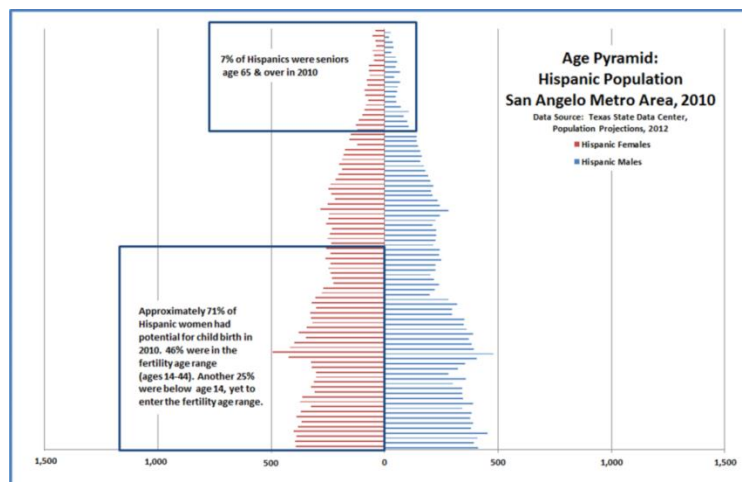
July 3, 2014

The March issue of Texas Monthly includes a smartly titled essay, “Coming to Our Census.” The article is Michael Ennis’s review of *Changing Texas*, a new volume by former State Demographer Steve Murdock and his associates at Rice University. Ennis says this “may well be the most important book about Texas published in years.” However, he believes that few Texans will ever read it.

Ennis skillfully sums up the message of *Changing Texas* by citing two simple statistics. The average age of non-Hispanic white women in Texas is 42 years. The average for Hispanic women is 28. These numbers, as Ennis says, foretell a factor in the future of Texas.

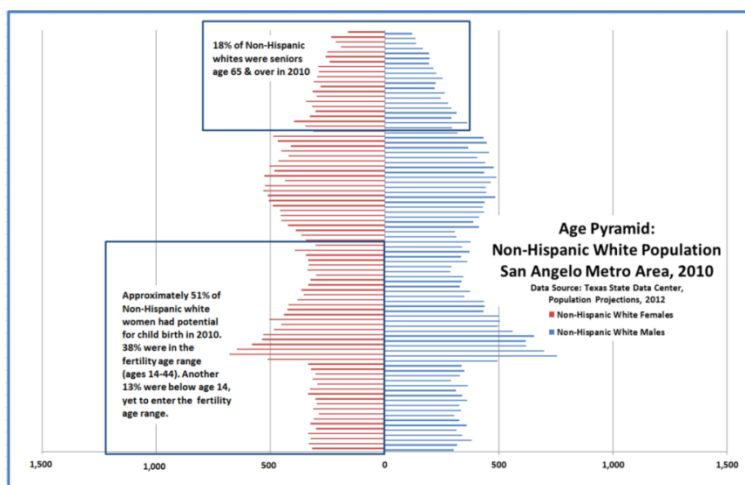
The age pyramids for the Hispanic and non-Hispanic white populations in the San Angelo Metro area, shown below, tell the story for our local part of Texas. The pyramid for local Hispanics takes the shape of a much younger population compared to non-Hispanic whites. Some 18 percent of whites were seniors age 65 and over as reported in the 2010 Census. This compared to only seven percent of Hispanics.

Figure 45: Age Pyramid: Hispanic Population



More important to understanding the future is that 46 percent of local Hispanic women were in the fertility age range between 14 and 44 when nearly all childbirth takes place. Another 25 percent were girls below age 14 who will be entering their childbearing years.

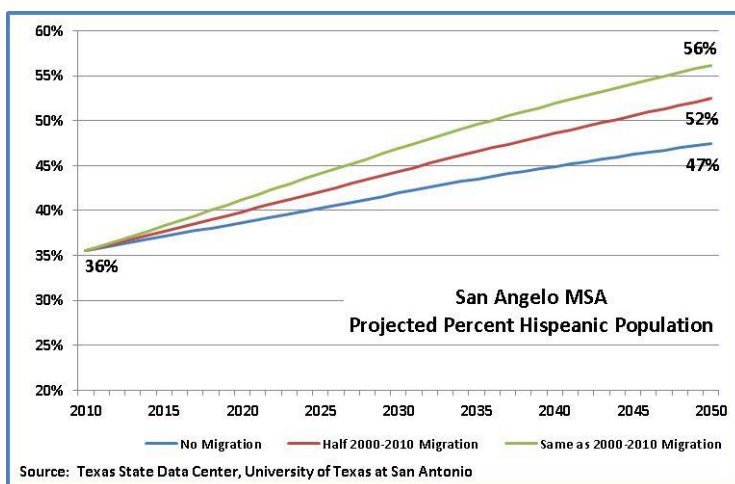
Figure 46: Age Pyramid: Non-Hispanic White Population



This means about 71 percent of local Hispanic women have the potential to give birth now and in the decades to come. Only about 51 percent of non-Hispanic white women are in the same age range. Consequently, the Hispanic population has much greater momentum for growth into the future.

Indeed, Hispanics very likely will become the majority of the local population by mid-century because of that momentum. Current projections from the Texas State Data Center for 2050, shown in the chart below, fix the percent of Hispanics in the San Angelo Metro area at somewhere between 47 and 56 percent depending on the level of migration. Changing Texas predicts the statewide percentage will be between 51 and 56 percent, also depending upon migration.

Figure 47: Projected Percent Hispanic Population



Political pundits portray this transformation in a variety of tints ranging from fears about undermining “traditional American or Texan values” to enthusiasm for prospects of “turning the state blue.” The focus in Changing Texas is more sober and challenging however. The book

Pathways to Progress

demonstrates that Texas, as well as local San Angelo, can no longer tolerate current levels of social and economic disparity between non-Hispanic whites and minorities while also expecting to sustain a viable and competitive economy into the future.

Results from a set of recently updated statistical indicators covering the elderly population of San Angelo provide another way of illustrating the disparities in question. The Seniors of San Angelo Social Health Index tracks 15 factors based on data for 2012 from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. It includes indicators of housing and neighborhood environment attributes, income and education assets, and social isolation factors among elder residents in San Angelo's 20 census tract neighborhoods.

The index also ranks the city's neighborhoods based on a 0-100 point scoring process. The scoring assigns a score of 100 to the neighborhood with the most positive results for seniors on the 15 data items. The remaining neighborhoods receive lesser scores ranging down to zero for the section of town with the least desirable results for seniors.

This year's results identify the Sunset area (census tract 13.03) as the most desirable for seniors. The neighborhood fans out in a southeasterly direction from Sunset Mall over to College Hills Boulevard. The Red Arroyo shapes its northern border and the loop contains it on the south. Sunset is home to nearly 4,000 residents with 15 percent (about 600) forming its population of seniors aged 65 and over. The scoring places the Blackshear and Downtown areas (census tract 18) at the bottom of the city's neighborhoods. In the city's center, these areas are home to more than 2,600 people including about 300 (11.5%) seniors.

The racial and ethnic makeup of these two San Angelo neighborhoods is among their contrasting features. About seven of every 10 residents of Sunset are non-Hispanic whites. That ratio falls to fewer than two of every 10 in Blackshear and Downtown. Minorities comprise about 70 percent of seniors in Blackshear and Downtown, and only about 15 percent in the Sunset area.

A set of gaps in educational attainment and in the financial situation of residents also contrast the two neighborhoods. In the Blackshear and Downtown sections, a majority of seniors (61%) never completed high school. This compares to just eight percent of elders in the Sunset part of town. A large difference in high school completion also carries over to the working-age populations. Approximately two percent of 25-64 year-old residents in Sunset failed to attain the high school diploma compared to 37 percent in Blackshear and Downtown.

Significant disparities in income and earnings are the expected corollary of these education gaps. Accordingly, nearly \$15,000 separates the 2012 annual median earnings of full-time workers in Blackshear and Downtown (median = \$20,462) from Sunset (median = \$35,417).

Social security and retirement income data indicate similarly striking income gaps between the elder generations of the two neighborhoods. Most senior households in each area receive social security, but the average annual benefit for 2012 in Sunset was \$17,915 compared to \$10,828 in Blackshear and Downtown.

Only about one-in-five senior households in Blackshear and Downtown receive retirement income other than social security. The average yearly amount from these plans was \$11,172 in 2012. By comparison, an estimated eight-in-ten Sunset area senior households received non-social security retirement income averaging \$28,789. Since these income differences in current

Pathways to Progress

income between seniors reflect their respective earning histories, they represent proxy indicators of wage differences stretching back in time in the two neighborhoods.

The book *Changing Texas* drives across the point that it is exactly those disparities extending back into our community and state history that must change now, unless, that is, we are willing to have the trend of demography spell our destiny. Indeed, on the optimistic side, the book projects that closing the gaps between non-Hispanic whites and minorities can add millions of high-paying jobs and billions of dollars to economic growth in Texas and its local communities.

Either we change our ways to educate minorities and increase their earning capacities, or we enter a downward spiral. That is the harshly important message of *Changing Texas*. Yet, the reviewer Michael Ennis returns to the theme that the book will not change the minds of “rank-and-file” Texans “who aren’t going to read it anyway.” Ennis hopes the “political and business elite” will take note and move us toward the needed reforms.

The book is actually well worth every citizen’s attention. Just ask Max Parker, the current vice president of the SAISD Board of Trustees. In last week’s *Standard Times*, article “Education Pays,” Mr. Parker so eloquently spells out the relevance of *Changing Texas* to our own local schools. He admits having been “guilty as anyone of ignoring these topics and assuming others would solve these issues without my input.” *Changing Texas*, he says, helped him “understand why these issues have become so critical.”

Read the book! Better yet, let’s work together to close the gaps in this West Texas community!

[Table of Contents](#)

Not All Seniors Equal

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

October 1, 2015

Millions of Americans remember spending "A Few Minutes with Andy Rooney" on the CBS program 60 Minutes. Until his death in 2011, Rooney amused audiences for more than 30 years with his grouchy satire about current events and trends in the country.

Rooney was a master at capsuling the absurd inconsistencies of our lives in blunt punchlines. One example, "It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone." We created the Seniors of San Angelo Social Health Index to shine a light on how this contradiction reflects the quality of life experienced by elders across San Angelo's neighborhoods.

The Seniors Index includes 15 quality of life indicators based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey. The index links the indicators to neighborhood and housing qualities, income and education levels, and different types of social isolation experienced by seniors.

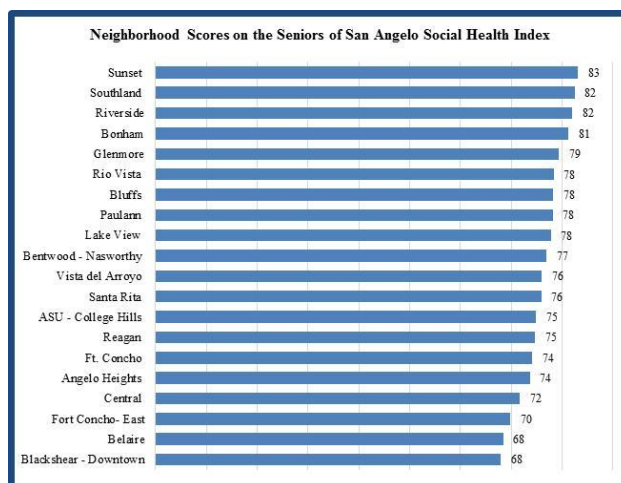
Based on the data, the best San Angelo neighborhood for seniors is Sunset. This is the third straight year for Sunset to top our rating of areas for seniors to live. The area fans out from Sunset Mall northward to the Red Arroyo and to College Hills on the west. Its score for this year's Seniors of San Angelo Social Health Index is 83.

We based the score on a 0-100 point scale that compares the 20 census tract neighborhoods of the city on the project's quality of life indicators. Positive outcomes on the indicators lead to higher scores.

Following closely behind Sunset's high score are the Riverside area in north San Angelo and the Southland neighborhood (score = 82 for both areas). The Blackshear and Downtown areas and the Belaire neighborhood are at the bottom with scores of 68 on the 100-point scale.

More than 18,000 seniors age 60 and over lived in about 12,500 San Angelo households in 2013 according to Census Bureau data. They comprised 19 percent of the population, while more than one-third (35%) of households in the city had at least one senior occupant.

Figure 48: Neighborhood Scores on the Seniors of San Angelo Social Health Index



Over 860 seniors lived in Sunset during 2013. Only half as many made their homes in the Blackshear and Downtown areas. Nevertheless, these neighborhoods highlight the contrasting quality of life for seniors like day and night.

September 13 was National Grandparents Day. Each year, we designate the first Sunday after Labor Day to recognize the growing number of American grandparents taking roles in raising the children of their children.

In the September 19 edition of the Standard Times, reporter Michelle Gaitan contributed a touching front-page human-interest story to honor them. The article did not compare various parts of the city, but it put a finger on a topic that depicts the real-life differences between the worlds of seniors in Sunset and Blackshear-Downtown.

Gaytan's article reported the 7.2 million American grandparents the Census Bureau indicates were living in the same household with grandchildren in 2013. Further, the Bureau estimates that 2.6 million of those (36%) had responsibility for meeting the basic needs of raising the children.

The same set of Census numbers show proportionately higher levels of grandparent responsibility for children in San Angelo. The 2013 data identified 2,667 San Angelo grandparents living with grandchildren while indicating that 49 percent of them (1,313) had responsibility for raising the children.

Seniors in the Sunset area, however, share very little of this experience with grandparents in other parts of the city. The data shows only 41 Sunset area residents over the age of 60 who lived in a household with grandchildren in 2013. None of them indicated child-raising responsibility.

The experience is dramatically different in the Blackshear and Downtown areas where the Census registered 34 residents age 60 and over living with grandchildren. In this case, though, more than half (19 or 55.9%) had responsibility for the children. More childcare responsibilities fall to the seniors in these parts of town. Ironically, however, these seniors have much less income and social support capacity to shoulder the responsibilities.

Pathways to Progress

For instance, the poverty rate for seniors in Blackshear and Downtown is six percentage points higher than it is for elders in Sunset. Their average retirement income (including social security) is less than half the average in Sunset. Blackshear and Downtown area seniors are only about one-third as likely to have a high school education or higher as those residing in Sunset. They are only about one-fourth as likely to be engaged in the labor force.

On the social support side of the coin, seniors in Blackshear and Downtown are more than twice as likely as elder residents in Sunset to be living alone or in a group quarters facility.

More than 10 percent of Blackshear and Downtown seniors lack access to a vehicle, and nearly seven percent do not speak English well. They are twice as likely to be unmarried compared to seniors in Sunset, and their disability rate is about nine percent higher.

The idea of aging is paradoxical, as Andy Rooney decried. It is also paradoxical, and a social injustice in our community, that responsibilities like child raising increasingly go to seniors. Too often, the responsibilities fall to elders who are themselves vulnerable and frail.

Morrie Schwartz was the Brandeis University sociology professor featured in Mitch Albom's moving story about spending Tuesdays with Morrie in the weeks and months of terminal illness leading to Schwartz's death in 1995. The experience inspired Albom to "Embrace aging." Schwartz left us with a powerful thought from his painful days at the end of his life, "Dying is only one thing to be sad over... Living unhappily is something else."

[Table of Contents](#)

Isolation among the Elderly

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

September 1, 2016

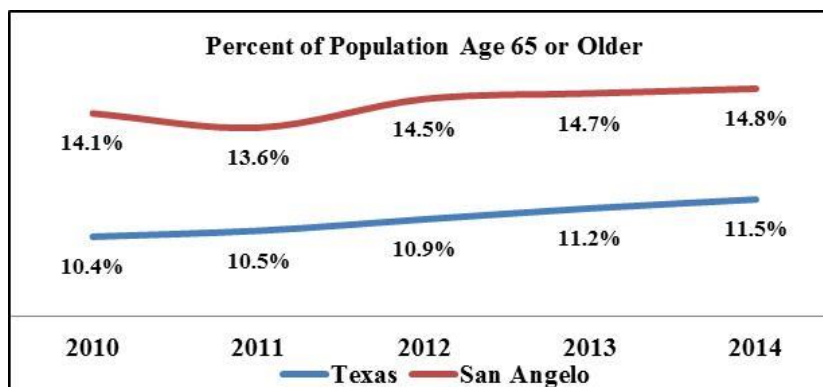
Agnes Gonxha, better known for winning the Nobel Peace Prize as Mother Teresa, believed, “Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.” Most of us want to live longer so that we can enjoy some golden years. Yet, as we age, the possibility of living alone mounts. Social contacts can diminish with retirement, children moving on, spouses and friends passing, and possibly a lack of mobility. The potential for loneliness and social isolation grows, especially for those living alone.

Studies detect numerous problems associated with social isolation. Becky Squires, former Chief writer for AARP, wrote that social isolation among seniors is “... more than ‘just’ a feeling and can be as bad for your health as smoking.” Indeed, health studies report that older, isolated people have higher rates of high blood pressure, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.

The Canadian National Seniors Council reported on the social isolation of seniors in 2014. They observe that social isolation contributes to depression or social anxiety leading to “atrophy of social skills, partly because of disuse, and partly because of the way that psychological symptoms can disrupt social behavior.” At the community level, social isolation of seniors diminishes social cohesion, increases health and welfare costs, and denies the rich experiences that older adults bring to families and neighborhoods.

Mindful of these observations, we looked at U.S. Census data on San Angelo’s 65 or older population to get a sense of the numbers at risk of experiencing social isolation. In 2014, 14,383 people residing in San Angelo were 65 or older. This amounts to 14.8 percent of the city’s population and represents a nine percent gain in the number of seniors since 2010.

Figure 49: Percent of Population Age 65 or Older



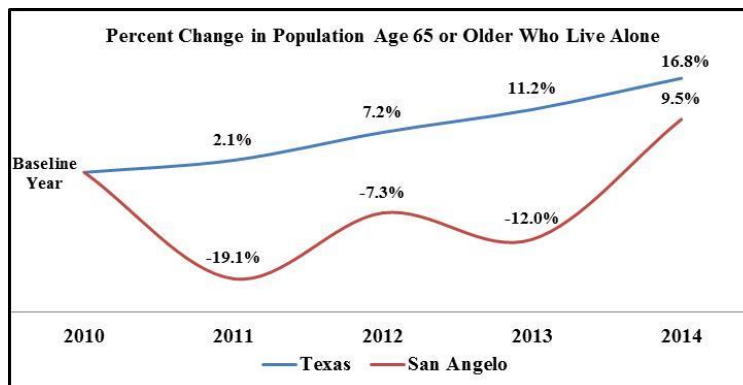
In comparison, 3.1 million Texans or 11.5 percent of the state’s population was 65 or older in 2014, an increase of 15.7 percent from the beginning of the decade. The state’s elderly population is increasing more rapidly, but San Angelo has a higher percentage of seniors among its citizens. The numbers support the state demographer’s predictions that the population of

Pathways to Progress

elders will continue to grow in San Angelo and across Texas in the coming years. Few communities are ready for the ramifications.

In San Angelo, 8,818 seniors were among the city's 36,051 householders in 2014. Most important for assessing the risk of social isolation is the fact that more than half (4,799) of the senior householders in the city lived alone. This represents an increase of 9.5 percent over the past five years. In comparison, the 743,872 senior Texans who lived alone in 2014 signaled a 16.8 percent surge over 2010.

Figure 50: Percent Change in Population Age 65+ Who Live Alone



A look at senior householders who live alone in San Angelo neighborhoods reveals an informative pattern. Neighborhoods with the lowest percentages of solitary senior householders are geographically on the perimeter of the city. Nine of the 20 census tract areas are on the city's outer edges including Riverside Lake View and Paulann on the north; Belaire and Glenmore on the east; Bentwood - Nasworthy (including the San Angelo Country Club area) on the south, and the Bluffs, Bonham and Southland to the west.

These areas are home to about 45 percent of senior householders in the city and 36 percent of them live alone. The proportions range from 21.9 percent in Riverside to 57.2 percent in the Bonham neighborhood. The average percent of seniors living alone in the nine tracts on the periphery of the city is 35.9.

Eleven neighborhoods in the city center and stretching southwesterly to the loop generally have higher percentages of elders living alone. The Downtown area forms the center with seven bordering residential sections including Blackshear, Reagan, East San Angelo, Fort Concho, Santa Rita, Central and Angelo Heights. Beyond Fort Concho and Santa Rita extending to the loop are Rio Vista, ASU-College Hills, Sunset and Vista Del Arroyo.

In contract to the circling outer areas, these neighborhoods have 55 percent of all senior householders, including 64 percent of those who live alone. At the high end of the range is Fort Concho where 70.1 percent of senior householders live by themselves. The Reagan section is lowest among the 11 areas with 38.2 percent.

While living alone does not necessarily mean seniors are socially isolated, it is a leading risk factor. Poverty, disabilities, low access to transportation, and inability to speak English well are examples other risk conditions, and the proportion of elders living with these circumstances

Pathways to Progress

ranges from three to seven percent according to the most recent census estimates. The data highlight the importance of taking meaningful steps to address the potentials and effects of social isolation within the senior population.

Organizations like Adult Enrichment Center, Concho Valley Senior Companion Program, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and Meals for the Elderly are jewels in our community. So too are the countless churches and other faith-focused groups working to bring seniors together, connect them to younger generations, and engage them in the community at large. Together, these important cornerstones do precious work to improve the quality of life of San Angelo's elder citizens by serving their needs across the spectrum from the physical to the spiritual.

However, the most important contribution of these organizations to countering the risks of social isolation likely reaches beyond the food delivered, the volunteer actions organized, or the sermons conveyed. Carl Jung, the early 20th century Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, gave an insight.

Jung founded an approach to psychotherapy called analytical psychology, which defines the well-developed self as the "regulating center of the psyche." With this perspective, Jung famously said, "Loneliness does not come from having no people about one, but from being unable to communicate the things that seem important to ones' self, or from holding certain views which others find inadmissible."

Citizens should support and claim pride in the city's religious and service organizations that support the elderly. They do much more than serve their needs and help raise the quality of life. They give countless seniors places and ways to communicate what is important. This "hidden thing" they do helps to counter the risks of loneliness and isolation.

Indeed, each of us can do more to enrich the surrounding communities and ourselves by giving seniors, and other overlooked or forgotten people we encounter, a place and a way to communicate what is important!

[Table of Contents](#)

HEALTH CARE IN THE CONCHO VALLEY

Caring about Care (January 4, 2012): Our hope for 2012 is that San Angelo, along with the state, can move past the notion that some of us deserve health care while others do not. The framework for reform is in place. We need to adapt it, fit it to our local community, and work toward removing the barriers of access to health care.

Not so well-being (June 6, 2012): Texas was one of 12 states with a failing grade on the National Women's Law Center national Report Card. The evidence from the Women's Index for the Concho Valley should alert hospitals, clinics, insurers, employers, county, city and regional officials, and other health partners to work together to improve the health and wellness of women.

Giving Thanks, Getting Checked (October 31, 2012): Cancer remains a leading cause of death for women, taking more than 39,000 lives across the nation each year. In Tom Green County, medical facilities diagnosed more than 140 women over the five years between 2007 and 2011. That adds up to an incidence rate of more than 5 cases for every 1,000 local women in the 40 and over "at-risk" age group.

Door to Reform (June 6, 2013): Given the nature of today's labor markets, the low level of educational attainment among women in San Angelo helps to explain why female median earnings locally fall below male median earnings by a greater margin than statewide. The low level of education also combines with the high local teen pregnancy rate to contribute to a higher percentage of female-headed families with children in the local community compared to Texas as a whole.

West Texas' Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care (September 12, 2013): Of the 29 Texas counties without a single primary care physician, 25 are in West Texas. This is just one reason why passionate alarms are frequently going off in our region about potentially dire shortages of healthcare professionals to meet expanded demands expected with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act.

Driven to Live a Healthier Lifestyle (November 7, 2013): Policies of local communities must respond to many forces. There are powerful demands to keep taxes low, to create profitable business environs, to restrain and discipline public finances and limit spending. Beyond the economic and budget-driven aspects of policy, however, community policymakers must be mindful for the health and vitality of children, families, and the populace in general.

Ounces of Prevention (March 6, 2014): The Texas Department of State Health Services estimated that hospital admissions for eight Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations (PPH) conditions resulted in hospital charges amounting to \$8.1 billion in 2012. A state legislative initiative invited Texas counties with extremely high rates of hospitalization for PPH conditions to apply for funding for community-coordinated action plans to reduce hospitalizations.

Index Raises Red Flags (May 1, 2014): Most people think of "lifestyles" in terms of the personal choices an individual makes to follow a certain positive or negative way of living. We perceive some people making "responsible choices" toward positive lifestyles such as a healthy one, for example. The normal progression of thought from there focuses on "irresponsible choices" by other people and typically blames them for individual flaws or problems leading to

Pathways to Progress

an unhealthy lifestyle. Funding expensive social programs attempting correction then meets the ire of citizens who blame individuals for perceived “irresponsible choices” and resent paying for it.

[The Gift of Health](#) (*December 4, 2014*): Overall, there were 2,675 local hospitalizations connected to the eight PPH conditions in the statewide project between January 2010 and August 2011. This declined by 11.3 percent to 2,373 after a local Partnership began its interventions for prevention. The overall impact of the project means that members of the local community experienced 302 fewer preventable hospitalizations. They additionally avoided hospital charges that would have amounted to about \$1.7 million.

[Getting With the ACA Program](#) (*January 1, 2015*): There are inequities of health insurance and access across the neighborhoods of San Angelo that affect the quality of life in various areas of the city. Over 92 percent of the residents living in the Bentwood and Nasworthy areas are insured, for instance, while more than four of 10 people in the Fort Concho-East section of town live without coverage. Overall, the percentage of people lacking health insurance is rising in 13 of the city’s 20 residential census tract areas according to the latest American Community Survey indications.

[Kid’s Health Index Reveals Disparities](#) (*February 5, 2015*): While affluence and poverty separate San Angelo children into different worlds, the crime that characterizes some neighborhoods is even more menacing. Children living in the city’s lowest income neighborhood, for example, are about 13 times more likely to experience a crime than are children living in the city’s higher income neighborhood.

[Standard of Safety](#) (*August 6, 2015*): Violence against women has far-reaching impacts that stretch beyond the atrocities suffered by individual victims. Women are essential actors in the social processes of navigating the health and welfare of children and other family members, as well as connecting the links between families and churches, schools, civic groups, and countless community organizations. These essential roles are one of the key reasons we conduct research at Community Development Initiatives to track and annually update 25 distinct indicators on the status of women’s health. The ASU Women’s Health Index (WHI) uses the indicators to compare conditions in four West Texas cities as well as statewide.

[Abortion Rate Declining](#) (*March 3, 2016*): Reflecting 10 straight years of reductions, the average annual abortion rate between 2001 and 2010 were 11.4 per 1,000 young women ages 15-19. Then, for the following three years (2011-2013), the average rate across Texas fell to 7.4 per 1,000. Consistent with the intent of the [State](#) Legislature, the flurry of new laws after the 2010 elections may be stimulating an accelerated pace of declines in abortions, including those provided for pregnant teenagers.

[White Midlife Despair](#) (*July 7, 2016*): Tom Green County midlife whites had a 22.7 per 100,000 average rate of suicide over the seven years from 2000 to 2006. This rate increased by 52 percent over the next seven years. Furthermore, there was a 42 percent increase in deaths from drug and alcohol poisoning among Tom Green County whites in the midlife ages, and the increase in fatalities from chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis was six percent.

Pathways to Progress

Health Status of Poor (*August 4, 2016*): During 2015, Community Development, working with community-based organizations across the region collected data dealing with the health status of a sample of the more than 39,000 residents of 20 West Texas counties living in poverty. Trained interviewers completed 597 interviews with people whose incomes were below the poverty line. The interviews covered more than 170 health-related factors.

[Table of Contents](#)

Caring About Care

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

January 4, 2012

As people contemplate improving their health this time of year, we wish everyone a healthy New Year. With the new beginning, we openly acknowledge personal flaws and fallibilities as person—after-person resolves to lose weight, quit smoking, restrain vices, get more exercise, relieve stress, take better care of themselves and get more out of life. Such resolutions reflect the pretense that health is a matter of individual choice. Perhaps this deception is a reason why so many resolutions at New Year are half-hearted.

Public health experts Paul Zimmet, K.G. M. M. Alberti and Jonathan Shaw write, “One of the myths of the modern world is that health is determined largely by individual choice.” They make this observation in the context of analyzing the worldwide diabetes epidemic, which is ironically, a disease that has a reputation for demanding precisely those qualities of self-restraint, and individual choice that we emphasize most in resolutions at this time of year. In addition, it is a disease jumping to the front of challenges concerning public health.

Diabetes is a once obscure disease that historically garnered scant attention as a major health problem. Today many of us not only in Texas and in the nation, but also right here in our community see it as a rising public health risk. Over the past decade, it has joined the ten leading causes of death with a death rate that has increased in Tom Green County by 36 percent since the year 2000. The most recent estimate that 12.4 percent of local adults have diabetes is two percentage points higher than the overall state and four points over the nationwide percentage of adults with diabetes.

The increasing prevalence and growing death rate, however, are not what makes diabetes so explosive as a public health risk. The alarm is due more to the aggressive long-term complications such as heart and blood vessel disease, stroke, nervous system disease, amputations, kidney and eye disease created by the ailment. These disorders cause irreversible damage that unfolds for decades before identification and treatment, which is usually at immense expense.

These qualities make diabetes one example of a group of non-infectious chronic conditions topping the public health agenda because their long-term degenerative impact on personal health is exacting a gigantic and growing burden on the health-care systems of one community after another. Obesity and hypertension are other examples.

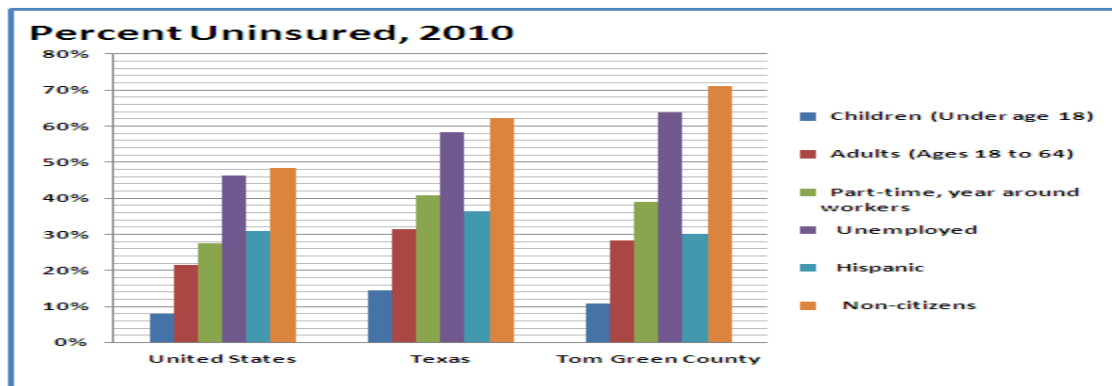
Prevention of the long-term complications is a key issue that requires much more than individual choice, will power, or personal responsibility. Inevitably, prevention demands medical intervention and management in ways not yet imagined in our community. Unfortunately, we are still stuck on the question of whether some folks should even have access to our system of medicine.

We are harsh in our town when it comes to this access. According to 2010 Census data, we have left some 28 percent of working age people (18-64) without health insurance, creating major obstacles for access to the health system. The number is 30 percent for Hispanics and 71 percent

Pathways to Progress

among non-citizens. Although fewer than 500 tots under age 6 do not have insurance, a staggering 91 percent of uninsured toddlers are Hispanic.

Figure 51: Percent Uninsured, 2010



Of course, there are reforms afoot not designed to promote the prevention needed to address the long-term challenges of chronic conditions and to improve access of vulnerable populations to health care. Health care reform, however, evokes reservations from many folks and outright hostility from a vocal few in our community. The most hostile among us seem reviled by the idea of sharing access with someone who botched the New Year's resolution to lose weight, quit smoking, restrain vices, take better care of themselves and get more out of life. They loath the thought of paying an insurance premium or tax that helps bring someone slacking on personal responsibility into the health care tent.

In reality, however, the world does not reach this kind of perfection. Indeed, the delusion that individual choice is the sole or primary driver of health outcomes demands a level of perfection likely to make pretenders out of the most ardent advocates of personal responsibility. The rate of breaking those tidings of good health at New Year is testimony.

The system is also imperfect so that those fortunate enough to have insurance coverage cannot escape sharing the cost for those without it. Charity care provided to uninsured or underinsured patients at hospitals illustrates.

The two main local hospitals reported nearly \$46 million worth of charges for charity care in 2009, charges they must recover in the revenue coming in from paying patients. If the more than 82,000 medically insured Tom Green County residents shared equally in the hospital charity charges, each would pay approximately \$554. Substantial portions of that hospital bill and insurance premium go to covering charity care.

Our hope for 2012 is that this community, along with the state, can move past the strange notion that some of us deserve health care while others do not. The framework for reform is in place. We need to adapt it and fit it to our local community. We need to work sincerely toward removing the barriers of access to health care. We need to work seriously on developing the prevention culture and methods that will enable us to address the real emerging challenges to the public health.

[Table of Contents](#)

Pathways to Progress

Not so well being

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

June 6, 2012

The National Institutes of Health remarks in its current strategic plan for improving women's health that "the health of women has a direct bearing on the health of their families and communities, and ultimately, the health of societies."

The point is understandable because women's bodies and behavior directly feed everyone's healthy development through birth. Beyond that, women do most to monitor health and behavior in most households and families, and to link household members to health information and access to healthcare services. Most often, women are primary care agents for children, spouses and other household members, including themselves.

Playing off the essential place of women in family and community health, the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) has been working for the past decade to develop a comprehensive set of standards for women's health. Their Women's Health Report Card assesses changes in women's well-being at the national and state levels to encourage action toward improvement. It provides a model framework that the ASU students adapted to create a more locally focused assessment of women's health in the Concho Valley.

The Report Card assigns grades to the nation and each state reflecting progress toward NWLC goals set with the advice of experts and health agencies. Texas was one of 12 states with an overall failing grade in the latest Women's Health Report Card for 2010. The results show Texas as a state with only a few strong areas such as a high percentage of women having timely mammograms and colorectal cancer screenings. There were many more weaknesses for Texas according to the Report Card.

Figure 52: NWLC Report Card

NWLC Indicator Description*	NWLC Goal	Texas Data	National Data
Strengths: Report Card Shows Satisfactory Progress			
Percent of women age 40 and older who have had a mammogram within the past two years	70%	73%	76%
Percent of women age 50 and older who have had a colorectal cancer screening	>=50%	57%	62%
Weaknesses: Report Card Shows Failing Progress			
Percent of women without health insurance	0%	31%	20%
Coronary Heart Disease Death Rate (per 100,000)	60.9	120	119
Stroke Death Rate (per 100,000)	29.3	53	46
Lung Cancer Death Rate (per 100,000)	18.1	38	41
Percent of women with high blood pressure	16%	29%	28%
Women diagnosed with diabetes (per 1,000)	25	86	83
Percent of adult women living in poverty	0%	16%	13%
Women's median earnings as a percent of men's median earnings	100%	80%	78%
Percent of women who graduate from high school	90%	81%	88%
*See the entire National Women's Law Center (NWLC) Women's Health Report Card at http://hrc.nwlc.org/ .			

The need for communities to set goals and organize actions to improve women's health is important for the future viability and vitality of families, households, and communities. The

Pathways to Progress

utility of the NWLC Report Card, however, has limitations by its lack of relevance to local communities for two reasons.

First, the NWLC data focuses only the national and state levels. In a state as expansive as Texas, use of data focused only at these levels necessarily glosses over very large differences between the state's regions, counties, cities, and towns on the diseases women contend with, their causes of death, their levels of education and economic standing, and numerous other relevant factors. Data that more clearly pinpoints local conditions for women is essential for any community level effort to establish goal-setting possibilities.

Second, when viewed from a local perspective, the NWLC Report Card also has a “one-size-fits-all” appearance because it seeks to provide a common standard for all communities to strive to attain. Hence, it may be useful to set a standard that says all women should have health insurance (100% coverage). On the other hand, such a standard may be unrealistic as an action goal for a sparsely populated West Texas county that has 40 percent of the female population without health insurance. A more appropriate goal for them may be to work toward getting females insured at levels similar to neighboring counties that have more coverage. After all, raising the levels for counties will lift the state as well.

The LWBIWH Women's Index for the Concho Valley

The new LWBIWH Women's Index for the Concho Valley solves both limitations of NWLC's national report. The Concho Valley Index is an annual health and wellness “lab checkup” on the counties of the region. Moreover, like other checkups, it offers a platform of data to guide collaborative planning to improve the state of women's health in the region. Use the index as an occasion for groups and communities to discuss and reflect on possibilities for improvement.

Figure 53: LWBWHI Women's Index of the Concho Valley

Summary: LWBWHI Women's Index of the Concho Valley	High Score	Low Score	Concho Valley Average	TEXAS	Number of Raising Texas Goals
Access Scores (based on Indicators 1-5 data below)	STERLING = 74	REAGAN = 27	56	59	
Indicator 1: Index of Medical Underservice*	48.9	No Data	47.1	49.4	4
Indicator 2: Percent of Females Uninsured	26.9	34.2	33.1	28.9	10
Indicator 3: Percent of Pregnant Women Who Receive Prenatal Care Within the First Trimester	No Data	54.7	55.7	58.6	7
Indicator 4: Pregnant Women as a Percent of Average Monthly Medicaid Enrollment	0.7	6.1	3.7	3.8	7
Indicator 5: Percent Females Who are Non-Citizens	10.1	10.5	5.3	10.3	2
Maternal Health Scores (based on indicators 6-9 data below)	SCHLEICHER = 97	REAGAN = 33	66	61	
Indicator 6: Percent of Women Giving Birth Who are Unwed	8.5	60.7	39.9	33.5	7
Indicator 7: Teen Pregnancies per 1,000 Females Age 13-17	0.0	26.3	21.8	22.2	6
Indicator 8: Fetal Deaths & Abortions per 1,000 Live Births to Females Age 13-17	0.0	500.0	115.5	165.71	4
Indicator 9: Infant, Perinatal & Maternal Deaths per 1,000 Live Births	0.0	169.8	126.0	209.09	1
Leading Causes of Death Scores (based on Indicators 10-14 data below)	STERLING = 93	MENARD = 2	65	75	
Indicator 10: Diseases of the Heart per 100,000 Females	325.2	867.3	267.0	151.2	9
Indicator 11: Malignant Neoplasms per 100,000 Females	0.0	520.4	252.5	137.8	11
Indicator 12: Cerebrovascular Diseases per 100,000 Females	0.0	86.7	28.7	46.6	5
Indicator 13: Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases per 100,000 Females	0.0	178.5	72.8	86.9	8
Indicator 14: Alzheimer's Disease per 100,000 Females	0.0	173.5	48.0	80.1	7
Death from Chronic Conditions Indicators (based on Indicators 15-17 data below)	IRION & STERLING = 100	SUTTON = 28	68	73	
Indicator 15: Primary Hypertension and Hypertensive Renal Disease per 100,000 Females	0.0	47.0	44.5	7.8	8
Indicator 16: Diabetes Mellitus per 100,000 Females	0.0	188.1	86.5	23.3	11
Indicator 17: Breast Cancer per 100,000 Females	0.0	170.5	43.4	112.1	4
Demographic Risk Scores (based on Indicators 18-22 data below)	IRION = 70	STERLING = 24	41	67	
Indicator 18: Labor Force Participation Rate (Percent) for Women Age 16 & Over	67.7	43.1	52.9	58.5	10
Indicator 19: Women's Median Earnings as a Percent of Men's Median Earnings	46.9	65.8	60.2	78.6	12
Indicator 20: Female Poverty Rate (Percent)	1.2	20.5	18.4	15.4	9
Indicator 21: Poverty Rate (Percent) for Female-Headed Families with Children	0.0	76.8	45.2	40.8	9
Indicator 22: Percent of Women Age 25 & Over with a High School Education or Less	58.7	60.1	57.5	45.8	13
Total Index (based on all 22 Indicators)	IRION = 75	MENARD = 37	58	67	164

*The Index of Medical Underservice is computed by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. It reflects a combination of factors affecting adequacy of service in an area. Lower scores show higher need.

The “lab work” includes 22 total community health measures. Five factors in the “lab work” involve women's access to healthcare; four look at maternal health; five deal with leading causes of death; three-detail death from chronic conditions; and five are on demographic risk factors.

Pathways to Progress

The “lab report” includes outcomes for each county. Additional comparisons with corresponding statewide outcomes create a framework for discussion of county-level public health goals for women’s health and wellness. We call these goals “Raising Texas Goals” because any actions initiated to improve one or more of them would improve the local county while lifting the State of Texas as well. The “lab report” also uses unique scoring to show where each county stands in relation to the other Concho Valley counties. A 0-to-100-point rating indicates how a county is doing compared to other counties in the region. Higher ratings mean the county has better public health outcomes for women than other parts of the Concho Valley.

The “Total Index” row in the summary table [below] identifies Irion County with the best overall score of 75 based on its average for all 22-community health outcomes. Sterling County followed Irion with a score of 74. Schleicher County (69) was next, followed by Tom Green (66), Mason (62), Kimble (61), Coke (57), Concho (55), Crockett and McCulloch (each 51), and Sutton and Reagan counties (each 49). Menard scored lowest with an overall average of 37.

The summary table also shows which counties scored high and low on the groups of outcomes dealing with healthcare access, maternal health, leading causes of death, chronic conditions, and demographic risk factors. The table also provides actual indicator data results for the high and low scoring counties as well.

The three right hand columns of information in the summary table give the most comprehensive data spelling out women’s health challenges for the Concho Valley region. The “Concho Valley Average” column gives the thirteen county average rating scores for each group of outcomes and for all 22 “Total Index” factors.

Hence, the thirteen Concho Valley counties had an average rating of 56 on the five indicator outcomes dealing with women’s access to healthcare. The “TEXAS” column just to the right shows the statewide score of 59 based on the same five outcomes.

Reading down the “Concho Valley Average” and “TEXAS” columns reveals that the local region scored lower than the state as a whole in four of the five outcome groups. The group of Maternal Health indicators is the exception where the regional counties have an average score of 66 compared to the statewide 61. Overall, the “Total Index” at the bottom of the table shows an average rating score of 58 for the Concho Valley on all 22 outcomes. This compares to a statewide rating of 67 for all outcomes.

The “Number of Raising Texas Goals” column is in red to spotlight instances where Concho Valley counties have women’s health outcomes that are worse than parallel statewide results.

For example, reading the row for Indicator 2 in the table reveals that the Concho Valley counties average 33.1 percent of Females Uninsured. The reported 10 Raising Texas Goals identifies the number of specific counties in the region that have higher percentages of Females Uninsured than the statewide level of 28.9 percent. Consequently, if one or more of those 10 counties organized initiatives to reduce the number of Females Uninsured, such actions would go far to improve public health conditions for women in that local community, in the Concho Valley region, and in the State of Texas.

Altogether, 22 indicator measurements for 13 counties create 286 possible instances of a regional county having a worse outcome than the state overall. As the summary table shows, worse

Pathways to Progress

outcomes for Concho Valley counties actually occurred 164 times, or for 57 percent of the possible instances. Put simply, when we use a variety of measures to take the temperature of Concho Valley counties on various conditions of women's health and wellness, the local counties lag behind the state more than half the time.

Remembering the State of Texas was one of 12 states with a failing grade on the NWLC's national Report Card, the evidence from the LWBIWH Women's Index for the Concho Valley should alert hospitals, clinics, insurers, employers, county, city and regional officials, and other health partners to work better together to improve the health and wellness of women. We can do better!

[Table of Contents](#)

Giving Thanks, Getting Checked

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

October 31, 2012

In *Heartsounds* -- a moving account about life-changing struggle against disease and death -- author Martha Weinman Lear wrote, "Women agonize... over cancer; we take as a personal threat the lump in every friend's breast." It was for this good reason to energize awareness and action to combat breast cancer that pink ribbons adorned everything from coffee cups and T-shirts to storefronts and football games this past month.

It is true that much progress has taken place in the fight against breast cancer in recent years. Indeed, the national death rate started a decline in 1990. That continues to this date.

Still, the disease remains a leading cause of death for women, taking more than 39,000 lives across the nation each year. In Tom Green County, medical facilities diagnosed more than 140 women over the five years between 2007 and 2011. That adds up to an incidence rate of more than 5 cases for every 1,000 local women in the 40 and over "at-risk" age group.

As vital as advances in treatment are to progress toward reducing breast cancer deaths, another set of factors with less star power than a new cancer breakthrough are immensely important. These factors involve early detection through screening.

Early detection begins with awareness and the kind of practical education that helps women conduct regular and effective self-examinations. Beyond that -- it is a shame to have to say so -- too many women must overcome obstacles in the health care system itself.

There are more than 26,000 women age 40 and over in Tom Green County. According to current medical recommendations, they should be getting mammograms every one or two years. If these women are like their sister-peers across West Texas, however, about 35 percent (or more than 9,000) of them have not had a mammogram within the recommended time.

Lack of access to the health system looms large as a reason why women fail to receive screening on a timely basis. About 3,700 Tom Green County women over age 40 (14%) live on poverty level incomes amounting to less than \$11,000 per year if they are single and \$23,000 if they are part of a standard family of four. Another 5,500 (21%) live on modest incomes only slightly above the poverty level and ranging up to no more than \$46,000 for a family of four.

Altogether, about 4,300 (16%) local women, age 40 and over, have no health insurance. In addition, many more have high-deductible plans that provide little or no coverage for prevention and screening services.

If last month was for breast cancer awareness, this month is for Thanksgiving. Moreover, women in San Angelo and the Concho Valley have great thanks to give this year, especially those who do not receive mammogram screening because of obstacles to the health system.

ABC4WT stands for Access to Breast Care for West Texas. ABC4WT is a program supported by the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas through the Laura W. Bush Institute for

Pathways to Progress

Women's Health at Angelo State University. Similar projects are also ongoing at other Laura W. Bush Institute locations in Amarillo and Lubbock.

ABC4WT at ASU's Laura W. Bush Institute has masterfully organized a coalition of hospitals and health care professionals to provide mammograms at no cost to underserved women age 40 and over residing in Tom Green County or one of thirteen additional surrounding counties in the Concho Valley region.

The program focuses on women who are uninsured or burdened by high insurance deductibles that create cost barriers to screening services such as a mammogram. Some may live in low-income households, but the program uniquely extends service to women with household incomes going up to 400 percent of the poverty threshold (about \$7,684 per month for a family of four).

ABC4WT's action coalition is rapidly blooming into a model for how to solve problems through collaboration. Both of San Angelo's medical centers, Community and Shannon, are ABC4WT mammogram providers along with the Sonora's Lillian M. Hudspeth Hospital and Brady's Heart of Texas Memorial Hospital.

Building out from these core provider partners, the coalition networks more than ten community organizations that support mammogram services by providing referrals, transportation, and outreach assistance. The coalition also conducts fundraising events for the special account that will provide a down payment for breast cancer treatment in the event that a mammogram provided by the program leads to a heartbreaking diagnosis.

Together, these organizations have already lifted the lives of 64 women who, before ABC4WT, had been living under a veil of smothering agony and worry that Lear wrote about in *Heartsounds*. As one of the ABC4WT women explained, "I don't know what I would have done, had this program not helped me. Thank you so much."

ABC4WT has created many individual life-lifting stories and there are surely more to come. Every instance of someone touched is precious.

At the same time, the ABC4WT story itself is hugely important for San Angelo and other local communities. Other noteworthy local coalitions tell the same story as they tackle important community problems such as hunger and nutrition, affordable housing, or drug and alcohol abuse.

The story of ABC4WT and those other noteworthy coalitions is a clear one about community change and development. The story applies to every community booster who thinks the sky is the limit for how high we can fly. It also applies to every skeptic believing that nothing will ever change, and to the rudest critics or cynics among us.

The story is simply this; communities change for the better when the people and their organizations pitch in together. So, PITCH IN!

[Table of Contents](#)

Door to Reform

*Kenneth L. Stewart, Laurence F. Jones, and Susan McLane
June 6, 2013*

Texas has the worst system of health care in the nation according to the most recent report card from the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ). AHRQ is the federal agency with frontline responsibility to provide research that improves the quality of health care services and helps communities and individuals make decisions that are more informed.

The latest report card rates the states based on health care outcomes from the year 2011. Interestingly, that was the same year Texas lawmakers locked horns in a fight over women's health care and abortion that cut the state's family-planning budget by two-thirds and stopped state funding for more than 100 family-planning clinics around the state.

Research at UT-Austin estimated that 144,000 fewer Texas women received health services in 2012 because of cuts. This year's legislative session shows signs of a more conciliatory tone that may restore some of the lost financing for women's health services.

The National Institutes of Health advises that the health of women directly affect the overall health of families and communities. This is partly because women are key actors in a healthy birth process, but perhaps more importantly, it is because they undertake most of the responsibility to monitor the health of family members and link them to health information and health care services. This is a major reason why a class of advanced undergraduate students worked this spring to produce the ASU Women's Health Index.

The ASU Women's Health Index is a community level wellness "checkup" for four West Texas cities including Abilene, Midland, Odessa, and San Angelo. Like other checkups, it offers a benchmark to compare results for the four cities as a guide to improving the state of women's health. Groups and communities should use it as an occasion to discuss and reflect on possibilities for improvement.

The index reflects more than individual incidents of physical or mental health issues. The checkup includes 23 community-level health measures specific to women. It uses the latest available data for each of the 23 indicators. Five factors involve women's access to healthcare; five more look at maternal health outcomes; another five focus on the leading causes of death for women; three detail deaths from chronic conditions; and five concentrate on the status of women in the community.

The complete index includes outcomes for each of the four West Texas cities. Additional comparisons of city-level data with corresponding statewide outcomes create takeaways to pinpoint possible public health goals for women's health. We call these "Raising Texas Goals" because any actions to improve any one of them will improve the local community while lifting the healthcare system of the State of Texas as well.

The table of Raising Texas Goals, shown below, summarizes ten action points for San Angelo to tag from the ASU Women's Health Index. The complete outcomes from the study also identified ten Raising Texas Goals for Midland, 12 for Abilene, and 15 for Odessa.

Figure 54: Raising Texas Goals

Raising Texas Goals	San Angelo MSA Tom Green County	State of Texas
Uninsured Females Under Age 65 (%)	26.1	24.4
Raising Texas Goal	-1.6	
Pregnant Women on Medicaid (% of Recipients)*	4.0	3.0
Raising Texas Goal	-1.0	
Births to Unwed Mothers (% Births)*	44.1	42.6
Raising Texas Goal	-1.5	
Pregnancies per 1,000 Females Age 13-17*	25.9	21.4
Raising Texas Goal	-4.5	
¹ Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases*	57.1	38.5
Raising Texas Goal	-18.6	
² Essential Hypertension and Hypertensive Renal Disease, 2000-2009*	9.2	7.9
Raising Texas Goal	-1.3	
³ Diabetes Mellitus, 2000-2009*	27.4	26.2
Raising Texas Goal	-1.2	
Female-Headed Families with Children (%)	14.7	12.4
Raising Texas Goal	-2.3	
Females Age 25 and Over with High School Education or Less (%)	49.4	44.1
Raising Texas Goal	-5.3	
Female Median Earnings as a % of Male Median Earnings	63.4	72.7
Raising Texas Goal	9.3	
Total Raising Texas Goals	10	

¹These are age adjusted death rates per 100,000 population. An asterisk (*) following an indicator description denotes county level data.

San Angelo lags behind the state as a whole on each of the factors in the table of Raising Texas Goals. For example, the first row of the table reports that 26.1 percent of San Angelo's females under age 65 have no health insurance. This number exceeds the Texas uninsured rate of 24.4 percent by 1.6 points.

In Texas, and even more so in San Angelo, lack of health insurance is a factor that impedes women's access to health care. That is why we need a special program like Access to Breast Care for West Texas (ABC4WT) operated by the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health in the local area. Other, more sustainable opportunities are also on the table to take steps toward local improvement of women's access to health care. For example, adopting reforms that enable small businesses to provide health insurance would do wonders. This alone could improve the state of women's health in San Angelo and help in raising women's health in Texas at the same time.

The largest deficiency identified in San Angelo's Raising Texas Goals applies to one of the five leading causes of death for women in Texas. The most recent data from 2009 indicates women in San Angelo have an age-adjusted death rate from chronic lower respiratory diseases of 57.1 per 100,000 females in the population. This is 18.6 deaths per 100,000 more than the overall state. Local women also have slightly higher death rates compared to the state from complications related to hypertension and diabetes. These two escalating chronic conditions threaten significantly increased cost and service burdens to the local and state health care systems in the future.

Maternal health conditions are also challenges in San Angelo. The local teen pregnancy rate, for example, is higher than the statewide level by 4.5 pregnancies per 1,000 females ages 13-17. In addition, pregnant women comprise a slightly higher percentage of local Medicaid recipients than across the state, and a higher percentage of births by unmarried women occur in San Angelo compared to the state.

One of the most important findings from the Women's Health Index is that nearly half (49.4%) of women over the age of 24 in San Angelo attained no more than a high school education.

Pathways to Progress

Across Texas, by comparison, 55.9 of women over 24 have completed some level of education beyond high school.

Given the nature of today's labor markets, the low level of educational attainment among women in San Angelo helps to explain why female median earnings locally fall below male median earnings by a greater margin (an additional 9.3%) than statewide. The low level of education also combines with the high local teen pregnancy rate to contribute to a higher percentage of female-headed families with children in the local community compared to Texas as a whole.

Ultimately, disparities like these concerning the community status of women are keys to generating and perpetuating the related deficiencies in maternal health and disease outcomes described above. In plain words, lack of education, low earnings, and single parenthood do not provide the immediate cause of a teen pregnancy or a death from a chronic lower respiratory disease. This compound of status factors, however, does set the conditions that foster those maternal and disease outcomes into motion. That is how deeply challenging the task of reforming health care is in local communities.

Grant makers in Health are a leading consulting group to top national foundations and philanthropists investing in improved health and health care. "If you care about health," they advise, "then women are key because their health and health-related decisions ripple outward to set the tone for families and communities." In San Angelo, working to ensure that quality health services are accessible and that adolescent girls stay in school are good pathways for building the future of our community while helping to fuel the progress of the state and nation.

[Table of Contents](#)

West Texas' Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care

Erin Gregg and Kenneth L. Stewart

September 12, 2013

Of the 29 Texas counties without a single primary care physician, a troubling 25 are in West Texas, that vast expanse stretching from the panhandle to Del Rio and westward to El Paso. This is just one reason why passionate alarms are frequently going off in our region about potentially dire shortages of healthcare professionals to meet expanded demands expected with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act.

The West Texas region is dotted by countless small towns with ten, twenty, or thirty-thousand residents. Smaller settlements populated by as few as 20, 50, or 100 souls are even more numerous. Many are tied together only by thin ribbons of dusty roads.

West Texans have a history of fortitude and resiliency surviving tough-nosed trials that accompany living in one of the most rural parts of the country. Those trials are the ingredients for good novels by authors like Elmer Kelton or Larry McMurtry. Challenges on the horizon today signal the need for vital preparation to meet future shortfalls in rural healthcare.

The elderly and Hispanic populations are each growing more rapidly in West Texas than elsewhere. Socioeconomic indicators like income, poverty, and educational attainment place the region behind the rest of the state and nation.

West Texans face formidable challenges when it comes to healthcare. Nearly all the small towns and settlements are medically underserved, and the most vulnerable people of the region suffer an array of health disparities.

A major contributing barrier is access to healthcare. Famously, more Texans lack health insurance than residents of other states do, and lack of insurance is even more prevalent in West Texas. The rural expanse of the region, moreover, portends its own barriers to access.

At least 30 percent of the population of West Texas lives in exceedingly remote areas with little or no public transit services. About half of those counties that have no primary care physician are also without an alternative such as a physician assistant or nurse practitioner in their midst. West Texas counties with no mental health professional, no pharmacy, and precious little access to emergency medical services are numerous.

Overall, 66 West Texas counties are designated primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA). Only 20 percent of the US population lives in an HPSA. This compares to 65 percent of West Texas residents who live in an HPSA.

Congress created Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a healthcare workforce committed to underserved populations. A nationwide network of AHECs now provide regional infrastructures to support this mission through initiatives focused on building relationships between university health science centers and community health service systems and stakeholders.

Pathways to Progress

Today, 56 AHECs rooted in 120 medical schools and 600 nursing and allied health schools operate more than 235 centers in almost every state to improve the health conditions of vulnerable, underserved populations.

The Texas legislature expressed commitment to West Texas in 2001 by funding the Rural Health Support and Education Initiative as a mandate to the Texas Tech University (TTU) Health Sciences Center to provide visionary, wide-ranging leadership for community programs to address rural healthcare needs.

The TTU Health Sciences Center soon responded by endowing the F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural and Community Health in Lubbock to reach out across the vast West Texas landscape. The Institute's West Texas AHEC now serves 105 counties and operates through a system of five community-based centers in Amarillo, Plainview, El Paso, Midland, and Abilene.

In July of this year, ASU's Community Development Initiatives established the office of the Concho Valley Regional Coordinator for the West Texas AHEC here in San Angelo. The new office seeks to generate collaborative efforts recruiting young people into education programs for health professions and to place students currently studying the health professions into community-based training experiences.

Developing a pipeline for students to enter the healthcare workforce begins with introducing youth to the opportunities. West Texas AHEC offers opportunities to engage students through a variety of activities ranging from classroom presentations and structured volunteer programs, to summer camps and leadership development opportunities.

AHEC also provides a comprehensive resource guide. Texas H.O.T. Jobs includes detailed information about healthcare opportunities in the state. The accompanying website, www.texashotjobs.org, averages over 658,000 visits each month.

Toward the other end of the healthcare workforce pipeline, community-based training experiences play a critical role in meeting current and mounting future healthcare demands. By collaborating with community stakeholders, AHEC strives to enhance opportunities for continuing education of current professionals as well as practical experience for students.

Placing students in underserved West Texas communities to complete rotations that directly expose them to small-town healthcare is especially important to securing improved access for the rural residents of expansive West Texas. The economic impact is significant: some 89,510 hours of clinical community-based training occurred in 2011-2012 adding more than \$1.6 million of value back into local economies. Meanwhile, the students' hands-on experience in West Texas small towns and settlements produces the type of personal attachment and professional investment that causes people to stay, perhaps for a career or a lifetime.

We recall hearing those passionate alarms about pending shortages in at least three contexts this past summer. First, rural healthcare leaders sounded the alarm loudly while emphasizing indicators of inadequate resources at the Crossroads Conference on the Transformation of Healthcare in West Texas held in Lubbock during June.

Later, the urgent need resounded again in conversations with local leaders like Mike Campbell at Esperanza Clinic and Lynn Rutland at Concho Valley MHMR about how the new presence of

Pathways to Progress

AHEC might best serve Concho Valley communities. More publicly, we see an uptick in attention to healthcare workforce gaps in the news media. Rick Plum's impressive appeal in last week's Standard Times on how "Nurse practitioners may be the silver lining in doctor shortage" illustrates the point.

With pressures on its healthcare workforce pipeline, West Texas now faces one of those "tough-nosed trials that accompany living in one of the most rural parts of the country." It is a privilege to have the office of the Concho Valley AHEC Coordinator to help along this pathway to progress.

[Table of Contents](#)

Driven to Live a Healthier Lifestyle

Kenneth L. Stewart and Holly Miles

November 7, 2013

Sometimes a light just comes on that has the effect of turning things in a different direction. That is what happened to James Sallis. His passion as a young psychology graduate of Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi was studying what motivates people to exercise and adopt healthy activities. He soon discovered what many enthusiastic new college graduates experience; that the theories he learned in school about what compels adherence to regular exercise routines were ineffective.

This was the realization that turned on the light. His approach to exercise motivation changed as he went on to advanced studies at Tennessee's Memphis State University. Today, James Sallis is University of California at San Diego Distinguished Professor of Family and Preventive Medicine. He is internationally renowned for his profound insights about how community policies influence environments in ways that affect the levels of physical activity, nutrition, and obesity among residents.

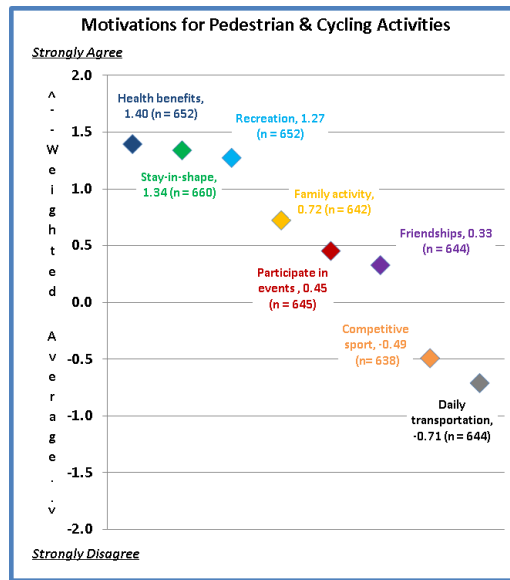
A similar curiosity about community influences on healthy lifestyles excited our interest at Community Development Initiatives to team up this year with the San Angelo Metropolitan Planning Organization to conduct a Survey of Pedestrian and Bicycle Project Priorities. Interested San Angelo residents received invitations through a series of news stories and public notifications to participate in the Survey during the spring and early summer.

Six hundred and seventy nine respondents from all parts of the city answered the 22-item questionnaire. The overwhelming majority (88%) expressed a sense of personal identification with walking, running, and cycling. Their levels of personal commitment, in combination with our comparison of the group with the known demographics of the city, indicate that the 679 respondents are a strong representative sample of local residents and households who champion pedestrian and bicycling activities.

One of the key findings from the Survey concerns the question that captured the young psychologist's passion: what motivates people. The Survey asked respondents to rate each of eight different motivations on a scale ranging from positive two (+2) representing "Strongly Agree" to negative two (-2) representing "Strongly Disagree" responses.

The results show that healthy lifestyle orientations are powerful motivation for those local residents involved with walking, running, and cycling activities. The potential to reap health benefits, to stay-in-shape, and to engage in recreation were the three most strongly rated motivations. Still relevant, but rated at only moderate levels by respondents, were thoughts of being motivated by opportunities to share activities with family and friends, or to participate in community events or competitive sport.

Figure 55: Motivations for Pedestrian & Cycling Activities



Alongside the drive for healthy lifestyles is a sense of disappointment with the local history of planning and development for cycling and pedestrian infrastructure and facilities. For example, more than 60 percent of the Survey respondents disagreed (either somewhat or strongly) with the idea that the City does an excellent job of maintaining existing facilities. More than 70 percent disagreed that – except for major traffic arteries -- cyclists can safely ride on most city streets. About 65 percent denied, in addition, that the City has addressed the pedestrian and cycling needs of all the neighborhoods and population groups in the community.

The Survey of Pedestrian and Bicycle Project Priorities demonstrate that San Angelo has a corps of champions for walking, running, and cycling activity. What the City lacks in their view is a continuous working policy committed to constant effort toward developing and creating the spaces for it.

In recent years, to be sure, positive additions developed by the City include the Texas Bank Sports Complex, improvements to neighborhood parks across the city, and sidewalk improvement projects in the Downtown and north-side areas to name a few. Additional progress is underway on a five- mile stretch of development for the Red Arroyo Hike and Bike Trail and for streetscaping plans to facilitate biking along the north Martin Luther King corridor. While the issue of walkers and joggers around Gun Club Road remains a thorny one, there is a new visionary plan out for redevelopment of parks and neighborhoods around Lake Nasworthy.

These steps overlap in some ways with the priorities of respondents to the Survey. The respondents threw strong support to developing cycling facilities around the Lake and along the complete length of Red Arroyo. They also gave priority to developing pedestrian facilities for walkable areas around the university, and in the Downtown zone. There are, however, key differences between the priorities of the Survey respondents and the progress of actual on-going projects.

Pathways to Progress

For one thing, the most strongly supported project priority of all options presented in the Survey was to develop new or improved sidewalks and pedestrian facilities in all the city's school service areas. This garnered a high priority rating from 72 percent of respondents, and a like percentage strongly recommended that this cause should receive priority for use of public funding. Contrary to what one sometimes perceives, the core priorities of the city's champions for pedestrian and biking activity are not just athletes or those driven by athletic competition. As noted, Survey respondents assigned only a modest degree of importance to opportunities for engaging in competitive sports as a motivating factor.

Another key difference between the priorities of Survey respondents and City's progress is the start/stop, on-again/off-again quality about actual projects. This quality stems from heavy reliance on funding from state or federal grants to realize action on the ground. By contrast, the local champions advocate a more constant City commitment.

For example, some 85 percent of Survey respondents agreed that the City should establish standards to provide for pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in all future development projects. More to the point, over 80 percent agreed that the City should commit an annual revenue amount to a dedicated capital fund for pedestrian and cycling infrastructure development.

All this leads to the exact quandary that changed the direction for James Sallis when the light came on. We might call it the Field of Dreams dilemma. Iowa farmer Ray Kinsella was inspired tremendously in the memorable 1989 movie when he heard the voice whispering, "If you build it, he will come."

Which comes first, an environment built to inspire healthy living or the motivated residents to use it? Is "build it so they will come" the best way to promote physical activity, or must building safe routes to schools, walkable areas, running paths, and bike trails wait on pent-up demand from highly motivated activity seekers?

Sallis' influential policy research says the choice between motivating a public and building a field of dreams is a false one. Instead, the key is to combine motivated champions of physical activity with a working community policy to build spaces that invite active healthy living habits. The benefits spread to elders, children, and other vulnerable populations at risk of sedentary lifestyles and chronic disease when that combination gains traction.

Policies of local communities must respond to many forces. There are powerful demands to keep taxes low, to create profitable business environs, to restrain and discipline public finances and limit spending. Beyond the economic and budget-driven aspects of policy, however, community policymakers must be mindful for the health and vitality of children, families, and the populace in general. That is what the local champions in the Survey of Pedestrian and Bicycle Project Priorities know.

[Table of Contents](#)

Ounces of Prevention

*Kenneth L. Stewart and Mimi Baugh
March 6, 2014*

Remember those billboards last summer urging us to “Drink lots of Water.” At first-glance, it looked like an ad by the “Culligan Man” until you noticed the Partnership for Better Health (PBH) moniker. Digging deeper into all the things PBH is doing reveals the big surprise. PBH is actually a fascinating public health experiment.

The whole thing started in 2011 when the state Legislature took an unusual move by appropriating two million dollars for a Department of State Health Services initiative (DSHS) to reduce something called Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations (PPHs) among adult Texans. The initiative focused on eight medical conditions with hospitalizations considered “potentially preventable” if individuals access and cooperate with less expensive outpatient healthcare services for prevention. DSHS estimates that hospital admissions for eight PPH conditions resulted in hospital charges amounting to \$8.1 billion in 2012.

The program invited Texas counties with extremely high rates of hospitalization for PPH conditions to apply for funding beginning in 2012 for community-coordinated action plans to reduce hospitalizations. Tom Green County gained support to take action on reducing hospitalizations for three targeted conditions: Bacterial Pneumonia, Urinary Tract Infection (UTI), and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or Older Adult Asthma (COPD-OAA). The local Partnership for Better Health emerged, and their actions reflect an exemplary community coalition reaching far beyond putting up billboards.

There are six anchor institutions at the core of the Partnership including the Area Agency on Aging, ASU’s Caregiver Research Institute, Baptist Retirement Community, San Angelo Community Medical Center, Shannon Medical Center, and the Tom Green County Treasurer's Office. By sharing resources, and working with additional community-based organizations during their first year of operations in 2012, the Partnership delivered Smoking Cessation services to more than 1,800 residents (about 1,600 had been diagnosed with COPD) and provided more than 17,000 vaccinations to local individuals at high-risk of Influenza or Bacterial Pneumonia. In addition, the Partnership organized public education opportunities promoting important preventive practices and provided intensive prevention education to more than 500 high-risk individuals and another 500 healthcare providers.

Experiments in public health like this one are frustrating when it takes a long time to learn the impacts. We do not fully know the results at this time. Still, DSHS opened a preliminary window into understanding the effect with a recent release of 2012 hospital admissions data for the targeted PPH conditions. The 2012 numbers are the first to coincide with PBH actions in the community as described above. On the surface, they are not particularly impressive when compared to admissions for the prior 2011 year.

For example, DSHS records show 281 adults from Tom Green County admitted for Bacterial Pneumonia in 2011. The number increased to 293 for 2012. Similarly, the number of admissions

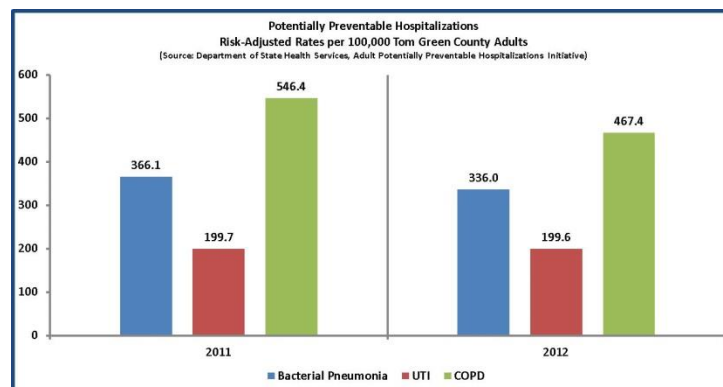
Pathways to Progress

for UTI went up from 156 to 176. Of the three-targeted conditions for Tom Green County, only COPD-OAA admissions declined. These fell from 277 in 2011 to 246 in 2012.

Concentrating only on the raw numbers is misleading however, because it does not take into account the size of the underlying population. In addition, subgroups of various sizes within the population differ in terms of initial risk of hospitalization for the conditions in question. Older people and former smokers, for example, have higher-risk for COPD-OAA admission to a hospital.

A more valid and insightful comparison focuses on so-called risk-adjusted rates, which control for differences in population sizes and subgroups with various levels of risk. Viewed in this lens, Tom Green County numbers look more promising. While the raw number of admissions for UTI increased between 2011 and 2012, for instance, the risk-adjusted rate remained flat.

Figure 56: Potential Preventable Hospitalizations



More impressive is an eight percent decline in the risk-adjusted rate of admissions for Bacterial Pneumonia. This rate decreased from 366 admissions per 100,000 adult residents in 2011 to 336 per 100,000 in 2012, even as the raw number of hospital admissions for Bacterial Pneumonia increased. Risk-adjusted admissions for COPD-OAA dropped dramatically by more than 14 percent from 546 per 100,000 adult residents in 2011 to 467 per 100,000 in 2012.

Of course, the timely coincidence between these year-to-year decreases and the actions launched by the PBH does not prove reduced risk-adjusted admission rates were caused by the vaccines, services, and education mobilized by the coalition. Our health care system is far too complex for that sort of simple cause-and-effect relationship to work neatly.

Indeed, a very large bundle of health care reform policies have created pressures and incentives for a number of years now urging hospitals to change their operations. Some demands originate from Washington, while others originate from Austin.

Local hospitals have been busy implementing their own reforms, regardless of the politics, and changes they are enacting provide additional feasible reasons for reduction in the risk-adjusted rates of PPH admissions. San Angelo hospitals, for instance, have taken steps to strengthen patient education as it occurs both inside and outside the hospital. They improved reconciliation of medications as patients move in or out and around hospital departments. They worked to improve management of all the moving parts that can enter into patient cases from within the

Pathways to Progress

hospital, from Doctors' offices and clinics, or from patient households and families. In combination with PBH coalition actions, these kinds of changes, which are ongoing in local hospitals, may form a better explanation of the dropping rates of hospital admission for conditions like Bacterial Pneumonia or COPD-OAA.

Sorting out the causes of decreased admission rates will come in time as more analysis unfolds. For now, it is important to grasp the significance of falling rates for the targeted conditions in Tom Green County. Continuing the trend can only reward the community toward the key goals of achieving better health and lower costs.

In Tom Green County, the average patient age for 2012 was 65, and more than 60 percent resided in San Angelo's 76901 and 76903 zip code areas. Higher risk, frequent users of health care services are most likely to experience potentially preventable hospitalizations. Moreover, it is no surprise that Medicare and Medicaid are the payment sources for more than 75 percent of the cases. After all, most preventable hospitalizations involve seniors living in the city's low-to-moderate income neighborhoods. Total hospital charges tied to Tom Green County admissions for the three-targeted conditions (Bacterial Pneumonia, UTI, and COPD-OAA) in 2012 were \$20.9 million.

The PBH story is a remarkable pathway to progress on health care reform for San Angelo and Tom Green County. Drink lots of Water and climb aboard!

[Table of Contents](#)

Index Raises Red Flags

Kenneth L. Stewart

May 1, 2014

Dr. Nancy Lee is Director of the Office on Women's Health at the US Department of Health and Human Services. She is a 1970s graduate of Houston's Baylor College of Medicine.

Dr. Lee recently shared an experience from her days in medical school as a means of observing Sexual Assault Awareness Month during April. She and other female classmates in med-school volunteered to support sexual assault survivors who came into the emergency room as part of their commitment to helping other women.

"Several times a month," she said, "I left my house in the middle of the night to hold a woman's hand as she recounted the details of one of the worst experiences of her life. Though I had never been assaulted myself, I could feel her terror and pain. Walking back into my dark apartment ... I felt real fear. Would it happen to me?"

Dr. Lee calls the trauma of sexual violence a "crime against women's health" because it generates many long-lasting health effects. The immediate trauma can involve physical injury to victims, terrible anxiety and stress, unwanted pregnancy, sexual transmission of infections, and dreadfully strained relationships. Years afterward, struggles with hypertension, obesity, migraines, heart disease, chronic pelvic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, and substance abuse are a few of the health problems that may follow the trauma.

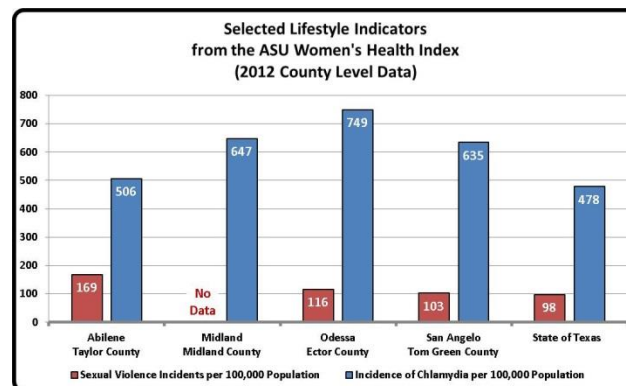
The far-reaching public health impact of this "crime against women's health" is good reason to track the extent of this abuse among West Texas women. This year's update of the ASU Women's Health Index (WHI) includes new elements to focus on the issue. Community Development Initiatives at ASU annually produces the WHI as a partnership venture with the San Angelo office of the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health.

WHI uses more than 20 statistical indicators to compare women's health conditions in four West Texas cities as well as statewide. The four cities are Abilene, Midland, Odessa, and San Angelo. The 2014 update is the third edition of the WHI.

A group of "lifestyle" indicators constitutes the new elements to the WHI this year. The first of the group is a direct measure of sexual violence in Texas and the West Texas cities. We based the WHI sexual violence measurement on the combined number of rape and sexual assault cases as regularly reported by police departments across the state to the Department of Public Safety.

For the year 2012 (the latest available data, shown below), for instance, the three police units in Tom Green County (Sheriff, SAPD & ASU Police) reported 112 cases of sexual assault and five charges of rape adding up to a sexual violence total of 117 incidents. The WHI measure then divides the incidents by the total population and multiplies the result by 100,000.

Figure 57: Selected Lifestyle Indicators



This procedure yields a sexual violence rate for Tom Green county and San Angelo of 103 per 100,000 residents. Not all victims of sexual violence are female, but by far, women and girls make up the vast majority.

We were unable to apply the measure to Midland and Midland County because correct 2012 data is unavailable. However, the measurement procedure for the state and the two other cities leads to a sexual violence rate of 169 per 100,000 in Abilene and Taylor County, 116 per 100,000 in Odessa and Ector County, and 98 per 100,000 for Texas overall.

It is noteworthy that each West Texas city has a higher rate of sexual violence than the state as a whole. Indeed, the average rate of sexual violence for the three West Texas cities is 129 incidents per 100,000 people – about 32 percent above the statewide incidence rate. The difference is not a happenstance of the oil boom or other current events since the West Texas cities have higher sexual violence rates over the years. The observation demonstrates the importance of the new focus on lifestyle indicators in the WHI.

Most people think of “lifestyles” in terms of the personal choices an individual makes to follow a certain positive or negative way of living. We perceive some people making “responsible choices” toward positive lifestyles such as a healthy one, for example.

The normal progression of thought from there focuses on “irresponsible choices” by other people and typically blames them for individual flaws or problems leading to an unhealthy lifestyle. Funding expensive social programs attempting correction then meets the ire of citizens who blame individuals for perceived “irresponsible choices” and resent paying for it.

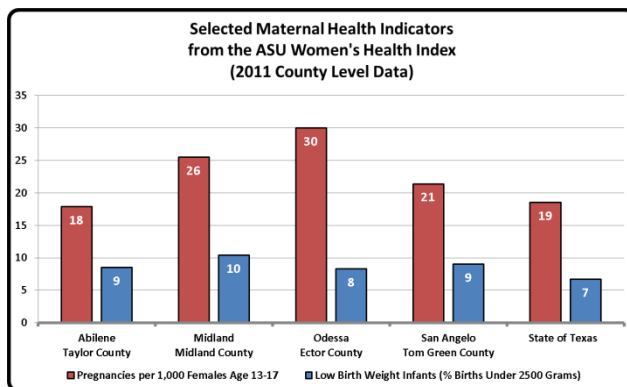
This resentful, blaming view suffers a key oversight though. It is blind to the community’s side of the coin. The fact that individuals choose lifestyles requires that both positive and negative lifestyles coexist in the community.

Yes, alongside the most celebrated community efforts to promote healthy choices is an underbelly of organized community activities – much of it accepted as legitimate - supporting unhealthy options. The higher rate of sexual violence in West Texas cities indicates something about the pulse of that organized activity has in our community. Indeed, other factors in the WHI multiply the concern.

Pathways to Progress

For instance, the incidence rate of chlamydia – the most commonly reported sexually transmitted infection – averages 635 per 100,000 residents in the four West Texas cities. This average is 33 percent higher than the state, mirroring the pattern for sexual violence. Also correlated is an average teen pregnancy rate for the West Texas cities (23.7 per 1,000 females age 13-17) that is 28 percent above Texas overall, and the average rate of low birth weight babies (9.1 per 100 births in the four cities) is 35 percent higher than the state as a whole. (The chart below depicts low birth rate and pregnancies per 1,000 females).

Figure 58: : Selected Maternal Health Indicators



Too many West Texans are hampered by the blame-game, resentful imagery stemming from popular thinking about negative lifestyles. On the other hand, a hopeful sign came to attention at just the moment I was putting the finishing touch on writing this column. The ASU president's office proclaimed April 23, 2014 to be Denim Day on campus as part of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month!

More and more leaders are recognizing the need to create awareness and manage activity in ways that bend the arc toward healthy lifestyles, just as they do to engender business and occupational success or civic involvement as part of a community's ways of life.

The Concho Valley Rape Crisis Center deserves applause for their leadership and tireless commitment to bending the particular arc revealed in this year's WHI lifestyle indicators.

House of Faith, the Concho Valley Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council, the Concho Valley CARES coalition, and San Angelo's Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health are just a few other organizations giving leadership toward the same direction.

These and other community organizations are leading the way. Many more of us need to jump onboard.

[Table of Contents](#)

The Gift of Health

*Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones
December 4, 2014*

The gift of better health is ever-present over the holiday season. The wish for that gift makes its way into prayers on the holy days and into uncountable resolutions for the dawning year. This year ends with glad tidings because the Tom Green County Partnership for Better Health has delivered exactly that, better health for the community.

The Partnership for Better Health is the local version of a statewide initiative that started in 2011 when the Texas Legislature appropriated funds for the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to work with communities toward reducing so-called Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations (PPHs).

The statewide project focuses on eight medical conditions that hospitalize thousands of adult Texans every year. They include Bacterial Pneumonia, Congestive Heart Failure, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Dehydration, Hypertension, Short-Term Complications from Diabetes, Long-Term Complications from Diabetes, and Urinary Tract Infection. These hospitalizations are “potentially preventable” if individuals access and cooperate with less expensive outpatient preventative services.

DSHS estimates that hospital admissions for the eight PPH conditions resulted in hospital charges approximating \$8.3 billion in 2012. That amounts to about \$433 for each adult resident in Texas.

We first introduced the local effort to reduce PPHs for Pathways readers in the March 6, 2014 edition of the Standard Times. We reviewed positive reductions in local rates of hospitalization for two key PPH conditions, Bacterial Pneumonia and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. At that time, however, assessment of the community impact was not possible due to a lack of follow-up data in the aftermath of activities implemented locally.

The Tom Green County Partnership for Better Health represents one of 16 Texas counties participating in the statewide initiative. The local Partnership targets its attention to three of the eight medical conditions in the overall statewide project. The local program works on Bacterial Pneumonia, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and Urinary Tract Infection (UTI).

Six local institutions anchor the Partnership including the Area Agency on Aging, ASU’s Caregiver Research Institute, Baptist Retirement Community, San Angelo Community Medical Center, Shannon Medical Center, and the Tom Green County Treasurer's Office. Between January 2012 and August 2013, the specific interventions implement by the Partnership include 31,643 flu vaccinations for high-risk adults; smoking cessation services for 3,571 adults with COPD; and education on prevention of Bacterial Pneumonia, UTI, and COPD for more than 500 healthcare providers.

Figure 59: Implemented Evidence-Based Interventions

Evidence-Based Interventions Implemented by the Tom Green County Partnership for Better Health January 1, 2012 - August 30, 2013	
Total Interventions for Prevention of Hospitalization with Bacterial Pneumonia:	47,012
High risk adults vaccinated for Bacterial Pneumonia.	8,094
High risk adults vaccinated for Influenza.	31,643
High risk adults educated on Bacterial Pneumonia and ways to possibly prevent it.	2,839
Education opportunities provided to the general population on Bacterial Pneumonia and ways to possibly prevent it.	15
Healthcare providers educated on Bacterial Pneumonia and ways to possibly prevent it.	555
Smoking cessation services provided to high risk adults.	3,866
Total Interventions for Prevention of Hospitalization with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease:	10,401
Adults with COPD vaccinated for Bacterial Pneumonia.	1,627
Adults with COPD vaccinated for Influenza.	670
Adults with COPD provided with smoking cessation services.	3,571
Adults with COPD educated on the condition and ways to manage it.	3,963
Education opportunities provided to the general population on COPD and ways to manage it.	15
Healthcare providers educated on COPD and ways to manage it.	555
Total Interventions for Prevention of Hospitalization with Urinary Tract Infections:	520
Education opportunities provided to the general population on UTI and ways to possibly prevent it.	15
Healthcare providers educated on UTI and ways to possibly prevent it.	505
Total of all Interventions for Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations (PPHs)	57,933
Source: Texas Department of State Health Services, Adult Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations Initiative.	

Altogether, the Partnership delivered 57,933 specific evidenced- based interventions to the county between January 2012 and August 2013. This amounts to 47 percent of all interventions for prevention of Bacterial Pneumonia, UTI, and COPD hospitalizations initiated under the statewide PPH initiative.

The local hospitals anchoring the Partnership are adding to the initiative by implementing changes in patient care to help reduce preventable hospitalizations. For instance, Justin Zamudio’s excellent reporting on “Prescribing Care” in the November 24 edition of the Standard Times details Shannon Medical Center’s innovative partnership with ASU to engage university students aspiring to study medicine in efforts to better manage the moving parts between the hospital, Doctors’ offices and clinics, and the patients’ households and families. Both Shannon and Community hospitals are taking steps to strengthen patient education, both inside and outside the hospital.

As Mike Gilliam, who leads the statewide PPH project at DSHS, says, “The Tom Green County Partnership for Better Health is an outstanding example of organizations coordinating and sharing their limited resources to improve community health.”

During October this year, DSHS released the most recent available data to evaluate the impact of the PPH initiative. The data is the first to allow comparison of hospitalizations before and after the 16 counties in the statewide project launched their respective intervention actions. Unpacking the results reveals a dramatic picture of how beholden our community is for the gift of better health from the State’s PPH initiative and the Tom Green County Partnership.

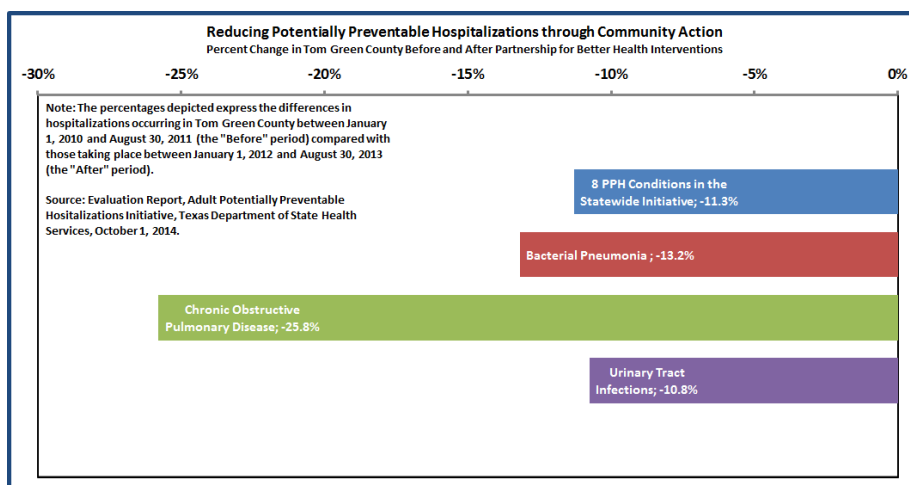
The DSHS evaluation tracks hospitalization data for PPH conditions over two time windows. The “before” time window includes hospitalizations between January 2010 and August 2011 because the 16 counties in the statewide project had not yet implemented any actions toward prevention during that time. The “after” window consists of hospitalizations between January 2012 and August 2013 because that is when the counties in the project rolled out their efforts. It was during this time, for instance, that the Tom Green County Partnership launched its 57,933 specific interventions described above.

Pathways to Progress

Tom Green County achieved stellar progress toward reducing hospitalizations for COPD. During the before window of time, 570 COPD hospitalizations occurred. This compared to 423 PPHs for COPD in the period after the local Partners launched the campaign for vaccinations and other specific interventions to prevent hospitalization with COPD. The difference represents a 25.8 percent decrease in preventable hospitalizations and 147 fewer Tom Green County residents hospitalized with COPD.

Reduced hospitalization numbers for the other two medical conditions targeted by the local Partnership for Better Health are also noteworthy. Between the before and after time windows, hospital admissions for Bacterial Pneumonia dropped by 78 (13.2%) from 592 to 514, and UTI hospitalizations fell by 38 (10.8%) from 353 to 315.

Figure 60: Reducing Potentially Preventable Hospitalizations



Overall, there were 2,675 local hospitalizations connected to the eight PPH conditions in the statewide project during the before time window. This declined by 11.3 percent to 2,373 after the local Partnership started rolling out its interventions for prevention.

The overall impact of the project means that members of the local community experienced 302 fewer preventable hospitalizations. They additionally avoided hospital charges that would have likely amounted to about \$1.7 million.

Some historians call Benjamin Franklin “the first American” to highlight his multifaceted influences on the sciences, politics, and culture of the nation at its beginnings. It was Franklin who coined the aphorism we have all heard about the value of an “an ounce of prevention.” Perhaps we have slipped too far away from this truism in the recent history of American health care and caring for our health.

Say thank you over this holiday season to the people you know who do the work of health care in our community. Thank them for the gift of better health. Encourage them to work for a richer and deeper Partnership for Better Health; to help us reap more “ounces of prevention” next year.

[Table of Contents](#)

Getting With the ACA Program

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

January 1, 2015

Legendary reporter Walter Cronkite was widely known as the “most trusted man in America” during the 1970s and 80s. Those decades ago, Cronkite declared, “America’s health care system is neither healthy, caring, nor a system.” What makes his remark so memorable both then and now is its utter rebuke of the nation’s long struggle to institute a modern system supporting the health, wellness, and care of all Americans.

As early as 1912, the turn-of-the-century progressive’s Bull Moose Party championed Presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt in hopes that he could lead legislation for national health insurance. The campaign locked horns with American Medical Association, which by then had become a formidable political force that aggressively opposes most all forms of federal intervention in health care. Despite persistent health care cost increases, a challenge that remains all too familiar today, universal health insurance received scant legislative support during the early decades of the 20th Century.

Even during the dark years of America’s Great Depression, Congress failed to support President Franklin Roosevelt’s goal to include health insurance in the Social Security Act of 1935. The legislation did allow for research on health insurance topics, but provisions for care of the elderly and poor would not come into existence until 30 years later when President Lyndon Johnson signed legislation authorizing Medicaid and Medicare.

Opponents denied the sustainability of the two programs from the outset, while business leaders increasingly doubted the viability of employer-based insurance. As America’s most trusted man observed, health care morphed into a complicated patchwork of treatments for illness, unreliably available to many outside the elites, and completely inaccessible to millions of the nation’s most vulnerable members.

President Barak Obama made national health care a hallmark of his administration after legislators enacted the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010. The intent of the ACA is to increase the quality and affordability of health insurance, lower the uninsured rate by expanding public and private insurance coverage, reduce the costs of healthcare for individuals, and expand Medicaid eligibility and funding.

Critics charge the ACA is a government takeover of approximately one-sixth of the nation’s economy, which focuses on health care. Other concerns surround the mandatory requirement to participate, Medicaid expansion, the market exchanges, and various responsibilities of employers, insurers, and providers under the new law. Distorted facts, sound bites, and partisan bickering abound.

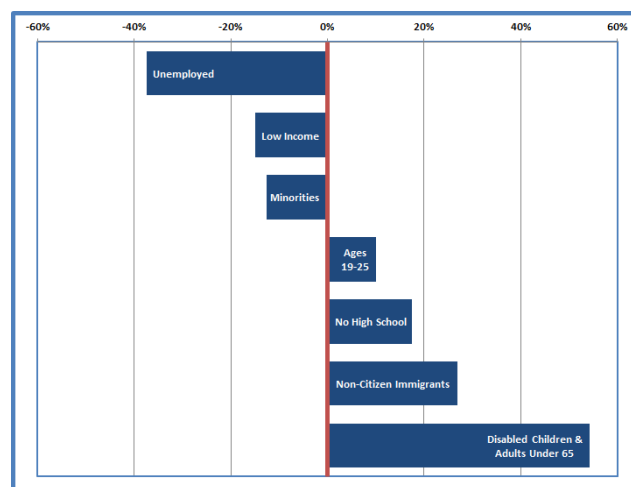
All the while, detailed analysis of health insurance trends at the Urban Institute’s Health Policy Center indicates that insurance coverage among vulnerable populations continues to lag all across the country, but especially in states like Texas that declined to participate in the ACA provisions for expanding Medicaid eligibility and funding.

Pathways to Progress

The Institute's most recent estimate from October 2014 identifies nearly 6.3 million uninsured adults in 23 states who are ineligible for insurance under the ACA because their state elected not to expand Medicaid eligibility. About 1.5 million (24%) of these live in Texas. Most are part of vulnerable groups who did not receive adequate service under a patchwork health care system. They include racial or ethnic minorities, non-citizens, the under-educated, the unemployed, disabled persons, low-income individuals and families, and young adults.

The Census Bureau's recently released 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) suggests that about 18,019 (19%) of residents in San Angelo lack health insurance. This number, however, includes only 10.3 percent of the city's non-Hispanic white population compared to 30.5 percent of minorities.

Figure 61: Demographics of Disabled Children & Adults



It also includes the majority (60.5%) of nearly 4,000 non-citizen immigrants in the city and 37.6 percent of more than 11,000 citizens over age 25 that have not completed a high school education. It also includes 43.5 percent of unemployed workers; 24.3 percent of children and adults under age 65 who have disabilities; 31.3 percent of low-income residents who live below the poverty line or dangerously near it; and 38.4 percent of young adults 19-25 years old.

The good news is that the data indicates the local percentage of uninsured people is declining among the unemployed, low-income individuals, and minorities. The bad news is that lack of coverage is growing among young adults, people without high school degrees, non-citizens, and disabled children and adults under 65.

These inequities of health insurance and access inevitably manifest across the neighborhoods of San Angelo and affect the quality of life in various areas of the city. Over 92 percent of the residents living in the Bentwood and Nasworthy areas are insured, for instance, while more than four of 10 people in the Fort Concho-East section of town live without coverage. Overall, the percentage of people lacking health insurance is rising in 13 of the city's 20 residential census tract areas according to the latest ACS indications.

These observations challenge communities to ask questions that few places in Texas seem willing to tackle. What is an acceptable level of coverage? Surely, it is a concern when nearly

Pathways to Progress

one in five residents is without coverage as in San Angelo. Surely, when lack of coverage is rising in most areas of the city, concern goes beyond political bickering on pocketbook issues to the moral fiber of community life.

Realistically, any solution to the health insurance problem requires a balance between the needs of health care providers and consumers. As in all kinds of insurance, health insurance is fundamentally about pooling risk. Every member of the pool shares in meeting risks by paying premiums, which cover the liabilities of individual participants when risk hits.

It is important to private insurers to sustain their businesses by working with large pools of customers. It is equally important to health providers to sustain their practices by working with patient-customers who financially backed by large pools of people sharing risk.

Likewise, political leaders share a responsibility to the public for creating pathways that help communities integrate vulnerable groups into the patchwork system of health care. In one way or another, this requires their participation in expanded insurance risk pools.

The ACA effort to expand Medicaid eligibility and funding took a step in that direction. Unfortunately, Texas leaders did not take this step, and to date, have not taken an alternate step either.

Today marks the beginning of a new year and as Mr. Cronkite liked to say at the end of a newscast, “. . . that’s the way it is.”

[Table of Contents](#)

Kid's Health Index Reveals Disparities

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

February 5, 2015

The Children of San Angelo Social Health Index is one of six sets of statistical indicators tracked and updated each year by Community Development Initiatives (CDI) at ASU. We created the index four years ago to assess conditions for our children. The index compares the well-being of kids in San Angelo's different neighborhoods.

The project compiles data from the U.S. Census, the Texas Education Agency, and the San Angelo Police Department into "report cards" for each of the city's 20 census tract neighborhoods. We based this year's report cards on 19 indicators that monitor four facets of life that affect children.

Fifteen of the factors focus on the children's households and neighborhood environments, levels of income support available for children in different parts of the city, and qualities of the neighborhood elementary schools.

The remaining four factors measure guardianship arrangements in a child's household. We used a 100-point scale to rate neighborhoods with higher scores indicating better overall conditions for children. The scores, based on each index indicator, compare the well-being of children in each neighborhood of the city.

A positive effect of the city's recent economic growth is evident in the results of the children's index. The economic surge reversed what had been a trend toward a reduced population of children in the city.

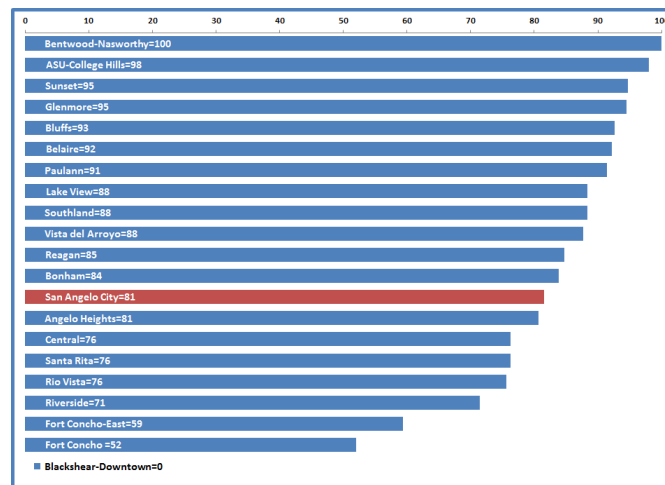
Specifically, the number of children fell by more than 1,000 (a 5% decline) between 2000 and 2010. Seventy percent of the city's neighborhoods had fewer children in the nest.

In 2011, the Census Bureau indicated a citywide gain in the number of children compared to the 2010 count. Recently released census estimates for 2013 show continued gains in the child population. The majority of the neighborhoods share in it with Vista del Arroyo leading the way (44% growth since 2010).

However, in some city center neighborhoods, the number of children has fallen. The Blackshear, Downtown, and Fort Concho areas have each seen declines of more than 10 percent since 2010. Only the Reagan area to the north of the city's center and the Fort Concho-East neighborhood on the eastern edge of the city has gained in child population since 2010.

An eye-opening aspect of the children's index is the striking view it provides about the serious gaps and disparities within the community. The index makes it clear that our children live worlds apart.

Figure 62: Children's Social Health Index Report Card



Census tract 17.08 is an area of the city that stretches from Bentwood Country Club to the south around Lake Nasworthy and eastward to encompass the San Angelo Country Club area. This neighborhood scored highest on the children's index and it is one of the city's most privileged areas.

Nearly 1,300 kids (about 6% of children in the city) live in Bentwood-Nasworthy. Almost 80 percent live in households with two parents. Their families enjoy a median annual income of more than \$92,000 — almost 90 percent higher than the median for all San Angelo families with children.

Children in four of the city center neighborhoods live only a few miles apart, but in very separate worlds. Census tract 18 combines the city's Downtown and Blackshear neighborhoods, while tracts 7 and 9 encompass the neighborhoods to east of downtown and around Fort Concho to the south.

These environs are home to about 2,300 children. Income in their families is much more limited than in Bentwood- Nasworthy. The median income of families with children in these parts ranges from \$22,500 in Blackshear and Downtown to \$34,444 in the neighborhood around Fort Concho. Child poverty rates range from 26 percent in the Fort Concho area to shocking levels over 50 percent in the Blackshear, Downtown, and Fort-Concho-East neighborhoods. In comparison, the child poverty rate in the Bentwood and Nasworthy neighborhoods is 12 percent.

Figure 63: Selected Indicators from the CSHI for San Angelo

Selected Indicators from the Children of San Angelo Social Health Index	Bentwood - Nasworthy (Tract 17.08)	Fort Concho- East (Tract 7)	Fort Concho (Tract 9)	Blackshear - Downtown (Tract 18)
Child Poverty Rate	12.0%	51.8%	25.6%	50.7%
Percent Children Living in Households Receiving Public Assistance	16.6%	43.8%	40.5%	66.3%
Serious (Group A) Crime Incidents per 100 Children*	13.2	69.4	91.1	168.1
Family Violence Incidents per 100 Children	2.1	14.1	16.5	27.6
Postsecondary Readiness Score for Neighborhood Elementary Schools **	40	28	61	26

*Group A Crimes are the most comprehensive set of serious crime incidents reported by Police. The group includes serious violent and property crimes as well as crimes such as drug violations, kidnapping, statutory rape, and sexual assaults that impact children.

**The Postsecondary Readiness Score is one of four indicators produced by the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) program. The indicator for elementary schools is determined by the percentage of students with STAAR test results at or above a satisfactory level of performance on two or more tested subject areas. A satisfactory level of performance in a test subject indicates that a student has a reasonable likelihood of success in the next grade or course according to the Texas Education Agency. The score ranges from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating a higher percentage of students achieving readiness. The state target for acceptable student readiness in elementary schools is a score of 12.

These income differences suggest that life for children in the city center is materially more difficult than in Bentwood and Nasworthy. The challenges families with meager resources face when making ends meet explains why 41-66 percent of children in the city center neighborhoods live in families receiving SNAP (food stamps), TANF (family assistance) or other types of public assistance.

While affluence and poverty separate our children into different worlds, the crime that characterizes the Blackshear and Downtown neighborhoods is even more menacing. These children, for example, are about 13 times more likely to experience a crime than are children living in Bentwood/Nasworthy neighborhoods. The risk is five times higher in Fort Concho-East and seven times higher in Fort Concho.

The same pattern holds on the chances that children will experience family violence. The lowest annual rate of family violence is 2.1 incidents per 100 children in Bentwood and Nasworthy. The rate is seven times higher in the Fort Concho-East area, eight times higher in Fort Concho, and 13 times higher in the Blackshear and Downtown neighborhoods.

The community is fortunate to have countless community organizations opening doors to help children. The missions of local non-profit agencies include providing them food, protecting them from violence and danger, advancing their education, contributing to their character development, helping to keep their families together, promoting their physical, mental, and spiritual health, and more.

Among the public institutions responsible for advancement of children, none is more important than San Angelo Independent School District (SAISD). School Board member Max Parker gave a recap of last year's "Pursuit of Excellence" in the New Year's Day edition of the Standard Times.

SAISD students, teachers, administration, and board members like Parker should celebrate the results of the 2014 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing program. The performance of local schools was at the forefront of official State measurements of student readiness for success in high school and beyond. As Parker's recap concluded, however, now is not the time for "resting on our laurels." The job is far from complete.

Pathways to Progress

CDI conducted an independent analysis of SAISD STAAR results for elementary schools serving various neighborhoods of the city for the children's index project. The STAAR assessments include four different assessments including estimates of: (1) satisfactory student achievement; (2) student progress, particularly in reading and mathematics; (3) satisfactory achievement gains by economically disadvantaged and minority students; and (4) "postsecondary readiness," as indicated by the percent of students with a reasonable likelihood of success at the next grade level.

As touted by Max Parker, all San Angelo elementary schools equaled or exceeded official State benchmarks for each assessment. Nevertheless, CDI's analysis reveals considerable variation between elementary schools. The variation relates to the separate worlds of our children.

For instance, the 2014 postsecondary readiness score for Lamar Elementary School serving the Bentwood and Nasworthy neighborhoods was 40. In contrast, the combined readiness score for the two schools serving the Fort Concho-East area is 28, and the combined score for the five schools serving Blackshear and Downtown is 26.

Each of these scores is well above the official State standard of 12 on postsecondary readiness for elementary schools. However, the score for the school serving privileged Bentwood and Nasworthy is 12-14 points higher than schools serving the city's neighborhoods that are more challenging.

A notable exception to this pattern is Fort Concho Elementary School situated in one of the city's challenging neighborhoods for children. Even so, Fort Concho's readiness score of 61 exceeds the State benchmark by 49 points and is the highest score of all city elementary schools.

The secret to Fort Concho's high-level performance on STAAR assessments is that it is more than a neighborhood elementary school. While it serves neighborhood children, it is also the city's only magnet school serving gifted and talented students citywide. The magnet attracts about 177 gifted and talented students. They comprise some 77 percent of all gifted and talented elementary students in the city, and about 38 percent of the school's more than 460 students.

Imagine if each challenging neighborhood were a magnet attracting advanced students to pursue the arts, the sciences, and the professions. Imagine that they interact with other neighborhood students in ways that enrich everyone's learning.

Imagine a city that educates children from all social backgrounds, all income levels, and all parts of town to be truly ready for graduation from high school, and then for success in college and the workforce. Nothing could carry this community further toward closing the gaps between our children's separate worlds. Few things could be a bigger boon to a better future for us all.

[Table of Contents](#)

Standard of Safety

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

August 6, 2015

Rebecca Solnit is an award-winning author and regular contributor to the Easy Chair column in Harper's Magazine. She remembers growing up "in a really violent house where everything feminine and female and my gender was hated." In her 2014 book, *Men Explain Things to Me*, she explores the things that too often go wrong in relations between men and women.

She includes a hair-raising exploration of the ultimate problem that can go wrong. "Violence," she learns, "doesn't have a race, a class, a religion, or a nationality, but it does have a gender."

Violence against women has far-reaching impacts stretching well beyond the hideous atrocities suffered by individual victims. Women are essential actors in the social processes of navigating the health and welfare of children and other family members, as well as connecting the links between families and churches, schools, civic groups, and countless community organizations. Breakdowns in these processes rattle families, neighborhoods, and whole communities.

These essential roles of women are one of the key reasons we conduct research at Community Development Initiatives to track and annually update 25 distinct indicators on the status of women's health. The ASU Women's Health Index (WHI) uses the indicators to compare conditions in four West Texas cities as well as statewide. The four cities are Abilene, Midland, Odessa, and San Angelo. The most recent update is the fourth edition of the WHI.

We score each of the four West Texas cities on a 100-point scale based on the 25 indicators used to track the status of women's health. Half of this composite score depends on how each city compares to the other three. The other half of the composite hinges on a city's comparison to the overall state. Higher scores mean better local health conditions for women. The results show women in San Angelo enjoy better conditions in significant ways.

To begin, San Angelo's composite score on the WHI is highest of the four cities. Indeed, its score of 75 out a possible 100 is 19 points higher than Abilene (56), 25 over Midland (50), and 51 more than Odessa (24). Community conditions related to the health of women are more positive in San Angelo than in other West Texas urban centers.

The ratio of primary care physicians (those specializing in general or family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and/or gynecology, and geriatrics) to the female population is a specific condition that favors women in San Angelo. Statewide, there are 141.1 primary care physicians per 100,000 women in the population. In San Angelo, there are 196.6 primary care physicians per 100,000. Abilene's ratio of 162.9 is more favorable than the overall state as well, but Odessa (129.0) and Midland (110.4) fall below the state level.

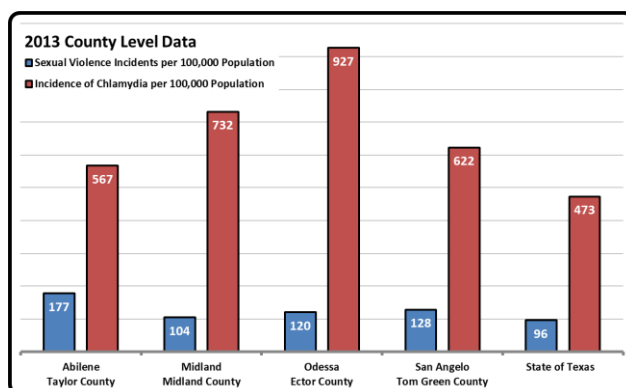
Other factors influencing access to health care also favor females in our community, even if some do so in cutting ways. Although 20.1 percent of females under age 65 being uninsured is an appalling number for San Angelo, for instance, it is lower than the statewide number of 23.8 percent, and lower than Abilene, Midland, or Odessa.

Pathways to Progress

Correspondingly, San Angelo has many positive health outcomes in the female population. Compared to the state and the three other West Texas urban centers, San Angelo's rates of infant death and low weight births are lower, and the city has lower female death rates on several of the leading causes such as diseases of the heart, cerebrovascular diseases, and Alzheimer's.

We can celebrate that, by comparison with other places in Texas, health care is delivering for women in San Angelo. At the same time, however, there is a mountain of unmet needs. Moreover, some of the most challenging of these are not particular to San Angelo. In the WHI, they appear in a group of "lifestyle" indicators revealing a set of patterns more common to the West Texas cities, but not so evident at the state level.

Figure 64: Comparison of Women's Health Care Indicators



The first of these factors is sexual violence. The WHI sexual violence measurement is based on the combined number of rape and sexual assault incidents as regularly reported by police departments across the state to the Department of Public Safety.

For the year 2013 (the most recent available data), the Tom Green County Sheriff's Department and the San Angelo Police Department reported 147 incidents of rape and sexual assault. This converts to a sexual violence rate of 128 rapes and sexual assaults per 100,000 residents of Tom Green County. The number is up from 103 per 100,000 in 2012.

More noteworthy is the pattern of sexual violence in West Texas. Indeed, the lowest sexual violence rate among the four West Texas cities is 104 per 100,000. The average is 133 per 100,000, which is 39 percent higher than the statewide incidence of 96 per 100,000.

Correlated to this excessive violence against women in West Texas is a disturbingly high rate of chlamydia. The chlamydia rate for 2013 in the four West Texas urban centers ranged between 567 and 927 per 100,000 people. The average was 712 per 100,000. The state chlamydia rate was only 473 per 100,000. The West Texas cities, compared to the state, also have a 12 percent higher average death rate for females from traumatic causes such as accidents, assaults, and suicides.

These differences between West Texas and the overall state are more than a happenstance of current events like the oil boom. Even though violence against women ratcheted up in recent years, the region has a history of high sexual violence rates over the years in comparison to the state overall.

Pathways to Progress

There is a tendency to think of lifestyles, especially negative ones, only as personal choices people make to follow their preferred ways of living. Yet, we often portray communities as “offering lifestyles” in promotional campaigns to attract new businesses or secure a place on one or another list of best places to live.

Indeed, many believe that it is a competitive economic necessity for leaders and stakeholders to spend time and resources to develop and display lifestyles distinguishing the community as a uniquely great place to live. The evidence about violence against women tells us, however, that it is not enough to develop a business friendly culture in the community. It is equally necessary to spend time and resources developing a culture of community health and welfare.

In 1994, then Senator Joe Biden authored the Violence against Women Act and worked it through the US Congress. On its anniversary in 2014, now Vice President Biden said, “When violence against women is no longer societally accepted, no longer kept secret; when everyone understands that even one case is too many. That’s when it will change.”

We need laws and policies. The real work of the people, however, is to change the culture.

[Table of Contents](#)

Abortion Rate Declining

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

March 3, 2016

The United States Supreme Court ruled in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that a woman consulting with her doctor has a constitutional right to opt for an abortion during early stages of her pregnancy.

The Court further endorsed this right about 20 years later in its *Planned Parenthood v. Laurence* decision. At that time, however, it affirmed that states could regulate women's access to an abortion services. The Texas State Legislature has enacted many restrictions since then.

Indeed, a recent Guttmacher Institute briefing reported that 31 state legislatures across the country were emboldened by the victories of anti-abortion candidates in the 2010 elections. These states proceeded to enact 288 abortion restrictions in five years between 2011 and 2015.

Only ten states accounted for 60 percent (173) of all the new restrictions enacted after 2010. Texas, with 13 new laws, was one of these ten.

Key elements of Texas law include the requirement that doctors present an ultrasound to depict the image of the fetus to women before an abortion and the restriction of public funding to abortion services in cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment only. Additionally, it includes the US Supreme Court's pending decision on the Texas law requiring abortion providers to meet standards for ambulatory surgical centers and to have admitting privileges at a local hospital.

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) establishes standards for licensing abortion facilities and clinical procedures in accordance with the Texas Abortion Facility Licensing Act, originally passed in 1989.

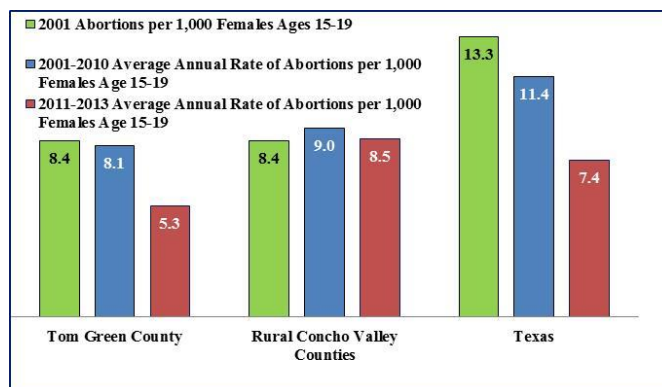
This law requires facilities to report abortions. DSHS, in turn, publishes annual vital statistics giving local communities a measured look at the occurrence of abortion among their residents.

The focus on Texas provided by the Guttmacher briefing prompted us to analyze abortions involving teenagers in Texas, Tom Green County, and the Concho Valley's rural counties to see if differences in rates occurred after the 2010 elections. Using DSHS data to reveal the differences, we compared the annual abortion rates for young women ages 15-19 from 2001-2010 to the rates from 2011-2013.

Abortion services provided for teens have steadily decreased across Texas since 2001. In that year, the statewide rate was slightly more than 13 abortions per 1,000 females ages 15-19. The rate declined year-by-year to 7.5 by 2013, yielding a 43.9 percent overall statewide reduction.

Reflecting 10 straight years of reductions, the average annual rate between 2001 and 2010 was 11.4 per 1,000 young women ages 15-19. Then, for the following three years (2011-2013), the average rate across Texas fell to 7.4 per 1,000. Consistent with the intent of the State Legislature, the flurry of new laws after the 2010 elections may be stimulating an accelerated pace of declines in abortions, including those provided for pregnant teenagers.

Figure 65: Comparison of Abortion Indicators



The story for Tom Green County is similar, even though abortions provided for local teens have not followed the year-to-year pattern of straight declines characteristic of the chart-line for the overall state. Still, starting from a rate of 8.4 abortions per 1,000 in 2001, teen females in Tom Green County saw a 37.6 percent reduction to a rate of 5.2 per 1,000 by 2013.

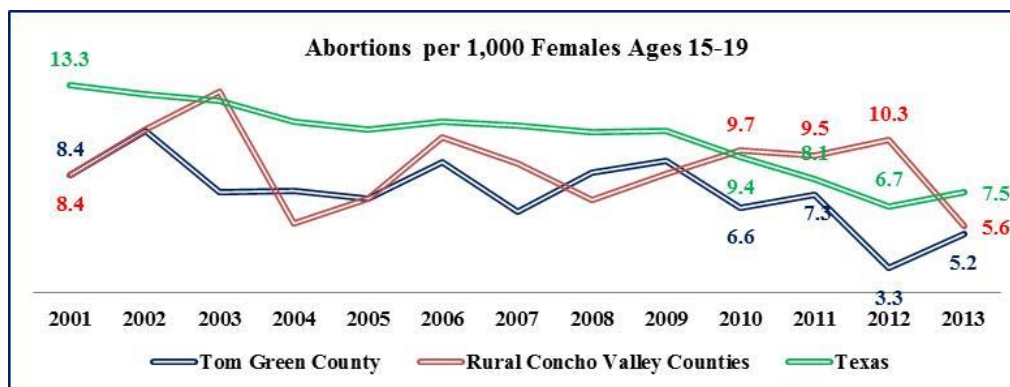
Moreover, abortions provided to local teens followed the pattern of accelerating declines after 2010. The average annual rate for Tom Green County between 2001 and 2010 was 8.1 per 1,000 females ages 15-19. This fell sharply to 5.3 per 1,000 for the three years 2011-2013.

Interestingly, more rural parts of Texas like the 12 Concho Valley counties outside of Tom Green may be somewhat insulated from the politics of abortion regulation post-2010. To be sure, the 12 rural counties combined together did see the level of teen abortions fall by about one-third from 8.4 to 5.6 per 1,000 young women between 2001 and 2013.

However, year-by-year swings up and down are much more variable in the rural counties than in more urban environs like Tom Green, and they starkly contrast to the steady yearly reductions at the statewide level. The result for the rural Concho Valley areas is that the post-2010 average annual abortion rate of 8.5 per 1,000 females ages 15-19 was only modestly lower than the average rate of 9.0 per 1,000 for the pre-2010 years beginning with 2001.

The Guttmacher briefing implies that these patterns of declining abortions resulted from the stimulus of numerous victories by anti-abortion candidates in the state-level elections of 2010. Meantime, organized pro-life advocates take comfort in results showing that abortion rates are at their lowest level since the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. They often point to their own efforts to push for more parental consent laws, reinforcement of abstinence in sex-education counseling, and other state and local measures to restrict abortion to account for the declines.

Figure 66: Abortions per 1,000 Females Ages 15-19



Ironically, organized pro-choice groups also take heart by attributing declines to their efforts to expand access to contraception and more comprehensive sex education programs. Accordingly, they believe that contraception and family planning services prevent unplanned pregnancies and improve outcomes for children while reducing the number of abortions.

Thus, the opposing sides on America's abortion issue credit their own respective initiatives for reducing abortion rates. Their ideological and political posturing, however, puts many women in a very difficult position, regardless of their legal status as teenagers or adults.

Some women with unplanned pregnancies, for instance, live in the nicest neighborhoods in town with abundant resources to nurture healthy babies with rich opportunities to develop into happy and success adults. Many more women, however, live in desperate conditions offering few resources to nurture healthy babies and little real opportunity to help children develop into the future.

Beyond the ideological and political battles, communities across America must face the fact that poverty rates in America, for both women and children, are among the highest in the world among developed nations. That is why our own local communities in the Concho Valley must continue the struggle to find solutions that work, not to satisfy the angry voices of pro-life and pro-choice forces, but to serve the best interests of the women and children.

[Table of Contents](#)

White Midlife Despair

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

July 7, 2016

Two prominent Princeton economists, Anne Case and Angus Deaton, published a unique scholarly article in the December 2015 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. They reported their findings showing a surge in death rates between 1999 and 2013 among non-Hispanic white men and women in the midlife ages 45-54.

The change undid decades of previous progress extending life according to Case and Deaton. More importantly, the authors show the death surge is distinct to the non-Hispanic white population in the prime of midlife. It grabs attention because people believe this demographic should be among the most likely candidates to enjoy the American dream, not losing years of life to an early death.

Intrigued by these national results, we decided to see if they apply to Texas and the local community in San Angelo and Tom Green County. We turned to the vital statistics on deaths available from the Texas Department of State Health Services to investigate.

Going back over two decades, we found there were 859 total deaths in Tom Green County in 1990. Given the population at the time, these yielded an age-adjusted death rate of 913.9 per 100,000 people. Researchers compute age-adjusted mortality rates because they enable direct comparisons across years and geographic areas, or between sex, race, and ethnic subgroups with different age distributions.

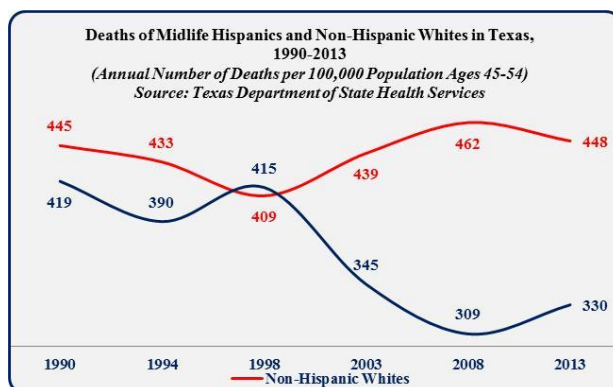
Twenty-three years later, there were 1,054 Tom Green County fatalities, converting to an age-adjusted death rate for 2013 of 798.9 per 100,000. The local community achieved a 12.6 percent reduction in the overall death rate over the two decades.

The numbers for Texas were more impressive. A little over 125,000 deaths in 1990 produced an age-adjusted statewide rate of 927.6 per 100,000. In 2013, more than 178,000 led to a rate of 749.2. Texas reduced the age-adjusted death rate by 19.2 percent between 1990 and 2013.

Remembering the Case and Deaton study found mortality climbing at the national level among midlife aged non-Hispanic whites after 1998, we zeroed in on the same segments of the state and local population to see if parallels exist. Interestingly, we found strong resemblances.

The age-adjusted mortality rate for non-Hispanic white Texans ages 45-54 stood at 445 per 100,000 in 1990. It continued from there on a downward trend, reaching 409 in 1998. The rate took one more step down to an all-time low of 399 per 100,000 in 1999. Then, it turned upward, reaching a peak at 462 in 2008. It receded to 448 per 100,000 in 2013.

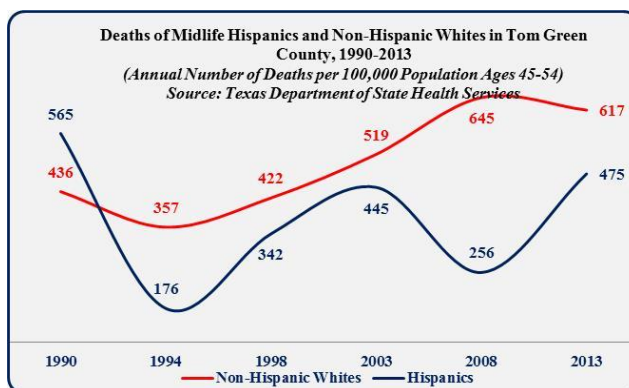
Figure 67: Deaths of Midlife Hispanics & Whites Only in Texas, 1990-2013



Fatalities among midlife whites in Tom Green County also went on a tear starting in the late 1990s. Similar to Texas and the nation, mortality for whites ages 45-54 had been in decline, entering the 1990s at 436 per 100,000 and falling to a record low of 357 in 1994. The subsequent upturn trended toward a peak high at 645 per 100,000 in 2008, and then faded to 617 in 2013.

Overall, the rate of death among non-Hispanic white Texans ages 45-54 increased by 12 percent from its low ebb of 399 in 1999 to the most recently available level of 448 in 2013. Incredibly, however, the rate soared among locals by 73 percent from a 1994 low of 357 to the most recent 617 per 100,000 for 2013.

Figure 68: Deaths of Midlife Hispanics & Whites Only in Tom Green County, 1990-2013



We also examined fatality trends of Hispanics in Texas and Tom Green County since the Case and Deaton study found no increases of mortality among this group that followed the pattern among whites. Again, the investigation produced results generally in agreement with Case and Deaton.

Locally, midlife Hispanics entered the 1990s with a death rate of 565 per 100,000, much higher than Anglos in the same 45-54 age range. Nonetheless, fatalities among midlife Tejanos living in Tom Green County dropped precipitously to an all-time low of just 176 in 1994. From there, rates seesawed up-and-down before reaching 475 per 100,000 in 2013.

Pathways to Progress

Thus, mortality among local Hispanics in the midlife years trended upward after the mid-1990s in a manner contrary to the national findings of Case and Deaton. However, in the early 1990s, the local Hispanic death rate did fall below and stay lower than the Anglo rate of mortality.

Our findings on Texas Hispanics in the midlife age range are even more in tune with the Case and Deaton study. In fact, the statewide death rate of Tejanos in the 45-54 age range follows an opposite path from that of Anglos the same age. While non-Hispanic white Texans in midlife experienced a 12 percent increase in mortality between 1999 and 2013, as noted above, the same age Tejanos saw a nine percent decrease after 1998.

The most controversial part of the Case and Deaton study starts with the assertion that “three causes of death ... account for the mortality reversal among white non-Hispanics, namely suicide, drug and alcohol poisoning ..., and chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis.”

They go on to show national data depicting large upticks in midlife white deaths from these health issues between 1999 and 2013.

We were unable to duplicate Case and Deaton’s findings on the three causes of death because of limitations on the available data for the smaller numbers of non-Hispanic whites in Tom Green County compared to the overall nation. Nevertheless, we found similar patterns of increasing mortality from these causes by averaging rates over two seven-year periods going back to 2000.

We found, for example, that local midlife whites had a 22.7 per 100,000 average rate of suicide over the seven years from 2000 to 2006. This rate increased by 52 percent over the next seven years. We also found a 42 percent increase in deaths from drug and alcohol poisoning among Tom Green County whites in the midlife ages, and the increase in fatalities from chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis was six percent.

It was 1965 when psychologist Elliot Jaques applied the term “midlife crisis” to highlight the reactions of adults when people realize their own mortality and how little time they may have remaining. The idea caught on like wildfire in popular culture during the following decades, becoming a key theme in a spate of movies like *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), *The Big Chill* (1983), and *City Slickers* (1991). Popular writer, lecturer Joseph Campbell, known for the phrase “Follow your bliss,” once described the midlife crisis as “what happens when you climb to the top of the ladder and discover it’s against the wrong wall.”

Of course, the midlife crisis highlighted by Case and Deaton is not about stereotypical middle-aged men or women who wildly blow up their marriage and family in a desperate quest for redemption from a disillusioned life. Instead, they reveal a health crisis bringing early death by like suicide and drug poisonings accompanied by declining liver function, failing mental health, and increasing disability and chronic pain.

The evidence points to a crisis of physical and mental distress hitting hard in what historically has been one of the most successful and privileged segments of the American population. It teaches us that the crisis in health is not limited to the poor, uneducated, uninsured, minority, or immigrant populations who so often become the scapegoats in health care politics.

The health crisis is not about a divide between “them” and “us” Solving it will not only change the lives of “them,” it will change all of us across the nation and in your community.

Health Status of Poor

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

August 4, 2016

Last month's PATHWAYS focused on important national health trends originally reported by Princeton University professors Anne Case and Angus Deaton. Case and Deaton found a nationwide surge in death rates since 1999 among whites in prime midlife age.

We found a strong parallel in the local community. As described in last month's column, a look at Texas vital statistics revealed the rate of death among non-Hispanic white men and women between the ages of 45 and 54 in San Angelo and Tom Green County climbed by 73 percent between 1994 and 2013. We also examined the trend among Tom Green County Hispanics because the Case and Deaton national study had found no increases of death among minorities that matched the pattern of whites. Again, our results generally agreed.

The significance of Case and Deaton's work is that it reveals a disturbing trend targeting non-Hispanic white Americans in prime ages of life for early death from causes like suicide, drug poisoning, and liver disease accompanied by failing mental health and disability.

Indeed, the findings stunned us so much that we decided to see if any related patterns are evident in data on the health status of the poor in our region of West Texas.

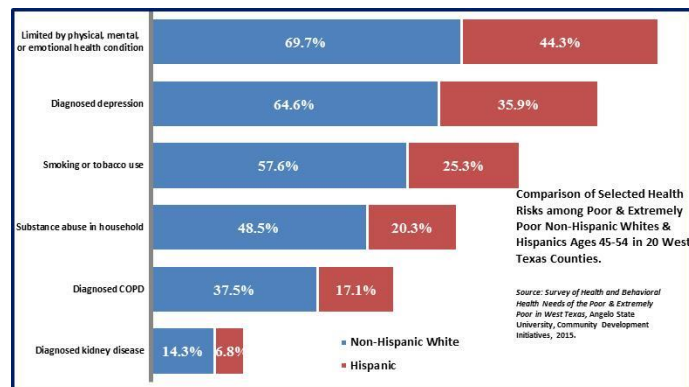
Community Development Initiatives at ASU worked with community-based organizations across the region during 2015 to collect the data by completing detailed face-to-face interviews with a sample of the more than 39,000 residents of 20 counties living in poverty. The 20 counties in the Survey of Health and Behavioral Health Needs of the Poor and Extremely Poor in West Texas included Coke, Concho, Crockett, Edwards, Irion, Kimble, Kinney, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Mills, Reagan, Runnels, San Saba, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton, Tom Green, Upton and Val Verde.

Trained interviewers, many of them members of the local communities in the study, completed 597 interviews with people whose incomes were below the poverty line. The interviews covered more than 170 health-related factors.

Returning to the Case and Deaton study, there is clearly a set of risky behaviors related that form essential components of the root causes they found behind the tragic rise in midlife deaths. Substance abuse, for instance, can lead to liver diseases and drug poisonings. Poor mental health, especially depression, is a key force in suicide. Certain results of the interviews from the survey of the poor in the West Texas fall in line with Case and Deaton.

The survey of the poor included 147 interviews with people in the same midlife age range (ages 45-54) Case and Deaton studied. These respondents include 66 Non-Hispanic whites (45%) and 79 Hispanics (54%). Six particular items from the interviews connect with their findings.

Figure 69: Comparison of Selected Health Risks



The first relates to mental health. Overall, 41 percent of the 597 total respondents to the survey of the poor in West Texas reported that a professional had diagnosed them as having depression. That number indicates a very high rate compared to an estimated 15 percent for the adult population in general. Nevertheless, the level of depression for the survey respondents in the 45-54 midlife age range was even higher at 49 percent.

This result, in itself, is consistent with Case and Deaton's contention that the surge in mortality correlates with failing mental health in the midlife ages. However, the real revelation from the survey of the poor revealed the difference in diagnosed depression between midlife Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites.

Of the 79 Hispanics in the 45-54 age range interviewed in the survey of the poor, 35.9 percent said doctors diagnosed them with depression. Again, high as that level is, it pales in comparison to the astronomical 64.6 percent of white non-Hispanics who told interviewers they received diagnosis of depression. The same high level of failing mental health that Case and Deaton found among prime-aged whites at risk of early death across the nation appears to hold true for midlife white non-Hispanics living in poverty in West Texas communities.

Other elements of risky behavior that Case and Deaton associated with the surge of death for middle-aged white Americans also show up in the interviews completed with West Texans in poverty. In each instance, the basic story is that risks resulting from behaviors posing immense issues for health occur at very high frequency among the poor. Alarming as the high levels are, however, whites in the midlife age range display even higher rates.

Thus, nearly 37 percent of all subjects interviewed in the survey said they smoke or use tobacco products. That high number jumped to 43 percent among 45-54 year-olds. It leaped to 57.6 percent for midlife aged white non-Hispanics, while a lower 25.3 percent of Hispanics aged 45-54 reported smoking or using tobacco.

Again, the same links unfolded when interviewers asked subjects about disabilities or having limitations because of their physical, mental, or emotional health. An alarmingly high 48 percent of all respondents reported feeling limited, but an astonishing 69.7 percent of whites compared to 44.3 percent of Hispanics said they feel disabled.

Pathways to Progress

The pattern repeated again, when we looked at other answers from West Texans living on the lowest of incomes. The reported frequency of substance abuse among household members was high, but it was even higher among subjects in the 45-54 age range, and higher still among whites in that age group.

Moreover, these behavior elements connect to serious, chronic, and deadly medical conditions. Non-Hispanic whites aged 45-54 in the survey reported a degree of diagnosed Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases (COPD) that was more than double the rate of the same age Hispanics in the survey. The pattern for kidney diseases was similar.

Case and Deaton made a curious comment ending the report on their project in last December's proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Noticing concerns about the possibility of midlife Americans aging into the Medicare system with worse health than current seniors, they close by saying, "those currently in midlife may be a 'lost generation' whose future is less bright than those who preceded them."

Some readers may see this as a grandiose overstated effort to give importance to their work. After all, the 45-54 year old age group is part of Generation X, the generation stereotyped as apathetic and disengaged young adults in the 1991 film *Slackers*. People in those days worried that Xers may be the first American generation not to do as well as their parents. Ironically, by 1997, the Harvard Business Review was praising tech-savvy Xers as the most important entrepreneurial generation in American history. Still, Case and Deaton actually understate the significance of their findings, and ours, when it comes to the immense challenge of preventative health care in the nation.

Too many Americans and West Texans believe preventing major diseases from swamping the health system is beyond reach because of the lack of personal responsibility and care in the ranks of poor and minority populations. Our findings, and those of Case and Deaton, show that whites and minorities, rich and poor, and people of all ages are actually in the same lifeboat.

This is more evidence sounding a loud siren alerting every segment of every West Texas community to come together to fashion new, innovative, and more effective pathways to prevention.

Note: Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas and the San Angelo Health Foundation supported The Survey of Health and Behavioral Health Needs of the Poor & Extremely Poor in West Texas. However, the viewpoints and observations expressed in this article are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Methodist Healthcare Ministries or the San Angelo Health Foundation.

[Table of Contents](#)

THE ECONOMY OF THE CONCHO VALLEY

[**Contributions of Immigrants Must Not be ignored**](#) (**February 29, 2012**): The best statistical information shows summarily that non-citizen immigrants contribute significantly, if often invisibly, to the local community. They comprise the majority of a relatively small foreign-born population. The majority have been in the US for more than 10 years. Despite language obstacles and low levels of education, immigrants engage the labor force more strongly than the native-born population, and even with low wages and high poverty, they are less reliant on public assistance and entitlements. Can anyone really doubt his or her value to the community?

[**U.S. Needs to Commit to Paying a Living Wage**](#) (**March 6, 2013**): San Angelo compared to regional peers in Abilene, Midland, and Odessa is more economic diverse. Out of 22 major employment sectors regularly tracked by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, San Angelo employs workers in eight sectors at rates that are higher than what is typical for Texas cities. However, median hourly wages in San Angelo reached the living wage estimate in only two of the eight sectors: education, training, and library occupations; and healthcare practitioner and technical jobs. Abilene, Midland, and Odessa all do better than San Angelo at generating jobs that provide a living wage in their respective cities.

[**GI Bill: A Success**](#) (**November 6, 2014**): American Community Survey data indicates that more than 23 percent of San Angelo's military veterans have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Veterans in nine of the 20 San Angelo census tract neighborhoods achieved degrees at rates that exceed this citywide level. Indeed, the educational achievements of the city's veterans compare very favorably with the 16.9 percent level of higher education attainment among the non-veteran population. Their educational achievements also pay off in the labor force. From 2008 to 2012, the median income for veterans living across San Angelo was \$35,385 compared to a median income of \$21,872 for the non-veteran populace.

[**A Community Divided**](#) (**June 4, 2015**): In San Angelo, levels of residential segregation are strong between people with the most education and highest-income compared to the least educated and lowest income residents. Despite valiant efforts by agencies and leaders across the city to solve economic and social problems, people with skills and resources to make community change too often are limited to insulated, superficial contacts with people who most need change.

[**Let's Get Serious About Reducing Poverty**](#) (**December 3, 2015**): Among 2,744 Tom Green County households in poverty during a record setting period of local economic growth, 59 percent were female-headed households. Additionally, sixty-seven percent of nearly 8,000 people over age 24 living in poverty had no more than a high school education, and Hispanic men, women, and children comprised 49 percent of the poor over those breakneck years of economic growth.

[Table of Contents](#)

Contributions of Immigrants Must Not be ignored

*Jennifer Boggs, Kenneth L. Stewart, and Laurence F. Jones
February 29, 2012*

As Canadians went about setting up immigration policy to promote social integration of new immigrants in 2001, the Immigration Minister of Canada, Elinor Caplan, stated straightforwardly, “Immigrants are a vital source of human capital that continues to expand our economy and strengthen our communities.”

The same message was once obvious in our own nation. It was what the eminent historian Oscar Handlin had in mind more than half a century ago when he declared, “Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history.”

Since Handlin, the phrase “We are a nation of immigrants” has become the obligatory cliché to start all public discourse about immigration. These days, however, the well-worn preposition precedes contentious arguments rooted in fears, hesitations, qualifications, limitations, and exclusions. If Canadians are clarifying the meaning of a nation of immigrants, we are surely muddling it.

It is not that evidence fails to show how immigrants contribute to the fabric of American life in meaningful and innovative ways. In our own backyard, for example, Dr. Fazlur Rahman has been a pioneer of cancer treatment in West Texas. The first oncologist in San Angelo, Dr. Rahman arrived in 1975 from then war-torn Pakistan. Resulting from the turbulence, his home country partitioned to become Bangladesh by the time his wife, Ara, was able to join him in San Angelo.

The Rahman’s story is similar to that of other immigrant families who flee traumatic situations in all parts of the world to seek refuge, security, and opportunity in a new land. The Congressional Budget Office reports that in 2009 the Immigration Naturalization Service granted 191,000 immigrants Legal Permanent Residence status for humanitarian reasons. These immigrants accounted for 17 percent of all admissions into the nation for 2009. Long periods of duress and separation between parents, spouses, and children are common to the immigration experience. This experience often creates what Ara Rahman has called “invisible populations.”

We learned lasting lessons about the invisibility of immigrants when ASU’s Community Development Initiatives served as hub for the local effort to promote public awareness and responsiveness to the 2010 Census. On one hand, we heard seething arguments about why immigrants should not be counted in the census because they are reputed to be law-breakers, a drain on the community and society, and largely uncommitted to one or another imagined “American” way of living. On the other hand, we heard firm arguments that few immigrants would step forward to be part of the census for fear of punishments ranging from the jeers of nativists to arrest or deportation.

Pathways to Progress

Clearly, the duress, difficulties, and contributions of immigration are largely invisible to Americans. Moreover, many immigrants choose to stay under the various radars that record and document our daily lives.

To understand the contributions of immigrants beyond storied families like the Rahmans, it is necessary to consult aggregate numbers. It is true that the census undercounts immigrant populations because they are invisible. Yet, it is also true that there is no more complete statistical portrait of immigrants in America. Despite flaws, it is important to know what census numbers tell about immigrants in the local community.

The most recent Census data indicates that some 7,600 foreign-born persons live in Tom Green County. They represent about 7 percent of the population. Most foreign-born (about 59%) are not US citizens, but most also are not recent arrivals to the nation. About 76 percent entered the US prior to the year 2000. More than 5,700, some 75 percent, came to the US from Latin American nations, predominantly Mexico.

Nearly 3,000, or 66 percent, of local non-citizen immigrants age five and over are “language isolated” in the sense that English is not the main language spoken at home, and by self-admission, these individuals do not speak English “very well.” Nearly 2,000 non-citizens age 25 and over (about 58%) have not completed high school.

Despite these obstacles to work in America, non-citizen immigrants are more engaged in local labor markets than others in the community are. Among residents age 16 and over, 69 percent of immigrant non-citizens are participating in the labor force and 67 percent have employment. Among native-born locals, the participation rate for the parallel labor force is 65 percent and the employment rate is 56 percent.

Non-citizen immigrants often work lower wage jobs and have a higher poverty rate. In Tom Green County, the median earnings for full-time male immigrant non-citizen workers were \$21,038 in 2010. This compared to \$36,699 for full-time native-born male workers. The corresponding poverty rates are 16.4 percent for native-born residents and 29.7 percent for non-citizen immigrants.

Low earnings and high poverty, however, do not translate into greater reliance on public assistance or entitlements on the part of immigrants. Ninety-eight percent of local households with non-citizen immigrant occupants receive earned income from employment while 13 percent have some social security income and less than one percent receives cash from public assistance programs. Twenty percent fewer native-born occupied households receive earned income, while larger percentages have social security benefits and cash payouts from public assistance.

The best statistical information shows summarily that non-citizen immigrants contribute significantly, if often invisibly, to the local community. They comprise the majority of a relatively small foreign-born population. The majority have been in the US for more than 10 years. Despite language obstacles and low levels of education, immigrants engage the labor force more strongly than the native-born population, and even with low wages and high poverty, they are less reliant on public assistance and entitlements. Can anyone really doubt his or her value to the community?

Pathways to Progress

Something obscured by the noisy political rhetoric over the national immigration issue is that the ethos of current immigration and nationality law invites immigrants to our borders. Current policy recognizes that immigrants provide goods and services, fill labor shortages, enrich our cultural diversity, and deserve the same equal protections as any American.

In San Angelo, however, there are surprisingly few places for immigrants to turn for assistance at winding the way through complex status and citizenship issues, let alone services to aid their integration into the community. Thank goodness for the limited counseling Catholic Charities provides and for the English training and GED services at Adult Literacy Council!

San Antonio-based immigration attorney Marisol Perez meets with local immigration clients every month and does an immigration information session on local radio. Alfredo Lozano, another San Antonio-based immigration attorney, also sees clients in San Angelo once a month. He notes that approximately 80 percent of his San Angelo clientele are Legal Permanent Residents that could petition to have family members come to the US. The other 20 percent are undocumented workers that have family here with legal status, but who rely on the alien-family member for key support. In most of these cases, says Lozano, the alien could successfully return to their native country to petition for re-entry and status as a Legal Permanent Resident. However, the wait time is 2 to 5 years – a long time for their resident dependents to suffer.

March is National Ethics Awareness Month. Consider the ethics of leaving populations “invisible” and vulnerable as we do with productive, contributing, aspiring immigrants. Help find legal remedies to complications of their status in America. Help embrace their inclusion into the community.

[Table of Contents](#)

U.S. Needs to Commit to Paying a Living Wage

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

March 6, 2013

Jeffrey Sachs has spent three decades helping developing countries to become effective participants in the global economy. His work has made him one of the world's most renowned and influential economists. In his recent book, *The Price of Civilization*, Sachs looks homeward to America and asserts that citizens and leaders must develop new habits of what he calls "mindfulness" if the nation and its communities are to retain their vitality on the global stage of the 21st century.

It is unusual to see a leading economist write beyond the key principles of business practice and profit making, but Sachs thinks a renewed habit of civic engagement is essential to rescue the nation from its sagging economic performance and sustain it for future decades. Other required habits of mindfulness, as Sachs views it, are a need to revitalize an ethic of compassion and cooperation in America, and a much-expanded acceptance of diversity.

In thinking about diversity, Sachs has much more in mind than the simple notion that Americans be more tolerant or respectful of racial, cultural, religious, or other differences among people. He expands the acceptance of diversity to encompass actions that, in a serious and continuous way, include a much more varied set of ideas and interests in the public square as Americans design, implement, and evaluate strategies to advance the nation and its neighborhoods and communities into the future. The living wage is one idea that merits a constant habit of mindfulness in America's communities.

Theodore Roosevelt was the first modern American President to declare, "We stand for a living wage," when he sought to regain the Presidency in a maturing industrial America more than 100 years ago in 1912. Decades later, in the 1930s, the idea helped fuel the adoption of a federal minimum wage which served for some time to maintain a rough connection between America's bottom tier of wage workers and a level of earnings sufficient to "maintain a family" as Roosevelt recognized a living wage could.

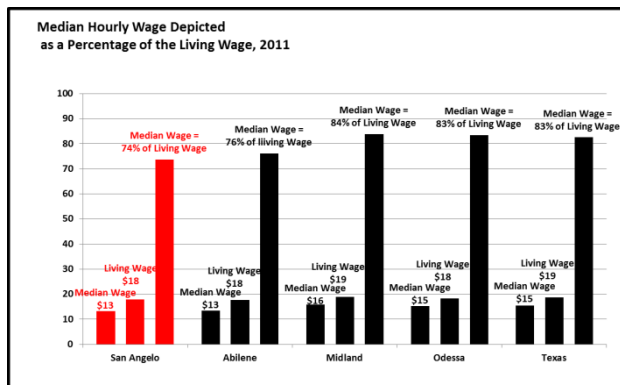
Maintaining that rough correspondence between the minimum wage and living wage started to wane, however, after the 1970s. Congress, driven by fears of interfering with business interests in an emerging high-stakes competitive global economy, has been increasingly hostile toward minimum wage increases. The consequence is that every year wages overall – not just the minimum wage – are falling more out of line with the expectation of making a living that can support a family.

Today, the Urban Studies and Planning department at Massachusetts Institute of Technology produces the best estimates of living wage levels for the different American states and communities. Shockingly, the most current estimates suggest that only three states (Alaska, Washington and Wyoming) have median hourly wage rates for private sector jobs that reach the living wage level. This means that more than half of the private sector jobs in 47 of America's 50 states do not pay a living wage.

Pathways to Progress

Texas, it turns out, does not stack up well in this already dismal picture. The Texas median private sector wage rate of \$15.44 in 2011 amounted to 83 percent of the state's living wage estimate of \$18.70 for a family of four. Texas ranks 32 out the 50 states on this factor.

Figure 70: Median Hourly Wage as a Percentage of the Living Wage, 2011



The gap between median private sector wages and living wage estimates is even more challenging for San Angelo and some other West Texas cities. Only Midland and Odessa out of the four urban centers in the immediate region, including Abilene and San Angelo, have median private sector wage rates that relate to a living wage in a way that is on par with the state as a whole. Moreover, remember, the Texas picture is unflattering compared to the nation -- which itself is failing to enable growing numbers of workers maintain their families.

Citizens and leaders of San Angelo, in particular, need to develop a Sachs-like habit of mindfulness that keeps the living wage as constantly in view as the monthly sales tax reports and employment figures. After all, San Angelo's median private sector hourly wage in 2011 was \$13.20. This was 74 percent of the living wage estimate of \$17.89.

A strong point of San Angelo compared to regional peers in Abilene, Midland, and Odessa is its economic diversity. In fact, out of 22 major employment sectors regularly tracked by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, San Angelo employs workers in eight sectors at rates that are higher than what is typical for Texas cities.

San Angelo has higher demand for workers in these eight sectors than most communities in Texas. Together, they account for about 49 percent of the area's total employment and some 46 percent of total wages.

Nonetheless, median hourly wages reached the living wage estimate in only two of the eight sectors: education, training, and library occupations; and healthcare practitioner and technical jobs. Abilene, Midland, and Odessa all do better than San Angelo at generating jobs that provide a living wage in their respective cities.

Figure 71: San Angelo High Demand Employment Sectors, 2011

San Angelo High Demand Employment Sectors, 2011	Total Employment	Total Wages	Median Hourly Wage	Median Hourly Wage as a Percent of Living Wage
Employment in All Sectors	43,120	\$1,559,650,400	\$13.20	74%
High Demand Sectors				
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	3,080	\$146,454,000	\$24.19	135%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	140	\$4,219,600	\$15.74	88%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	4,180	\$76,995,600	\$8.54	48%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	3,400	\$198,662,000	\$22.87	128%
Healthcare Support Occupations	1,530	\$36,704,700	\$10.59	59%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	2,010	\$72,621,300	\$15.59	87%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	1,800	\$36,306,000	\$8.77	49%
Sales and Related Occupations	4,960	\$147,411,200	\$9.90	55%
Eight Sector Total	21,100	\$719,374,400	Note: The San Angelo Living Wage Estimate for a family of 4 is \$17.89/hour. FMI go to livingwage.mit.edu .	
Eight Sector Percentage of All Sectors	49	46		

Keeping a keen awareness of deficiencies at generating jobs that provide a living wage is essential to a responsible measure of the mindfulness required to move San Angelo forward in these times. All the same, we must temper enthusiastic efforts to bend local pay scales in favor of the living wage with the sober recognition that one person's wage increase is another's added cost or price increase.

Still, nearly every significant modern economist through the ages acknowledged the essential obligation of a community to provide a living wage. This includes Adam Smith, the original founder of the capitalist theory of economics. Smith wrote in his masterpiece, *The Wealth of Nations*, "It is but equity ... that they [the laborers] who feed, clothe and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labor as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed, and lodged."

Translating to our times, Smith's point was simply this: it is a calamity for a community to demand self-sufficiency and personal responsibility of its members when so many lack the means to maintain a family. Thus, a living wage, to use Smith's words again, "can never be regarded as an inconvenience to the whole."

[Table of Contents](#)

GI Bill: A Success

*Laurence F. Jones, Kenneth L. Stewart, and Susan McLane
November 6, 2014*

On November 11, 1918, an armistice between Germany and the Allied nations took effect. Exactly one-year later, King George V of the United Kingdom held the first official Armistice Day on the grounds of Buckingham Palace. The event set the trend for a day of remembrance in many nations for fallen comrades-in-arms.

President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed that November 11 in the US should be "filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory." Eventually, Congress changed the name from Armistice Day to Veterans Day to honor all Americans, living or deceased, who served in the military at any time.

Like the US, other nations honor those who served on Veterans Day or other designated national holidays. Our country, however, has also sought to ensure that returning veterans can successfully re-enter society once their duty is complete. Many approaches to supporting re-entry originated in 1943 when the National Resources Planning Board recommended a bundle of education and training programs to address anticipated postwar problems. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (popularly known as the GI Bill) on June 22, 1944.

The GI Bill provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans that included low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business, cash payments of tuition and living expenses to attend university, high school or vocational education, as well as one year of unemployment compensation. Combat duty was not a requirement. Benefits were available to veterans who received an honorable discharge after serving for at least ninety days during the war years. Similar measures were applied to Korean War veterans in an updated 1952 GI Bill.

Later, Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough made education funding a keystone of his legislative agenda for 15 years on Capitol Hill beginning in 1957. Seeing education as an effective way to ensure individuals a chance to improve their quality of life, Yarborough believed all veterans should receive compensation for lost opportunities regardless of whether they served in times of war or peace. Seeing the GI Bill as the mechanism that had corrected what Yarborough called "this injustice," but only for service in times of war, the Senator authored the 1966 update to the GI Bill. He amended it to benefit all veterans serving in times of war and peace.

Since the original GI Bill, Congress also created other benefit programs to assist veterans with a hand-up for a range of basic needs such as housing, employment, and health care. Additionally, many states use federal money for their own initiatives.

Angelo State University, for instance, is currently participating in partnership with seven Texas community colleges to help veterans and service members maximize academic credits for their service when attending the university. The initiative is part of a current State of Texas College Credit for Heroes program to encourage colleges and universities to grant higher education credit for military experience as appropriate. The objective is to expedite the transition of both current service members and veterans into the Texas workforce.

Pathways to Progress

The Census Bureau's 2008-2012 5-year combined American Community Survey (ACS) data shows that 11.3 percent of San Angelo residents were veterans. The Bonham School neighborhood had the highest percentage concentration (17%) while Fort Concho-East, stretching out to the east of downtown, had the lowest percentage (4.7%) of veteran residents.

Figure 72: Comparison of Veteran and Non-Veteran Economic Indicators

Neighborhood	Veteran Residents					Non-Veteran Residents				
	Percent	College Degree	Median Income	Poverty Rate	Unemployment	Percent	College Degree	Median Income	Poverty Rate	Unemployment
Bonham	17.0%	20.4%	\$57,639	6.4%	1.2%	83.0%	30.6%	\$31,952	7.4%	1.7%
Glenmore	16.7%	21.9%	\$42,723	11.0%	1.7%	83.3%	13.9%	\$26,406	14.4%	2.6%
Paulann	14.2%	28.1%	\$43,466	7.3%	2.1%	85.8%	12.3%	\$20,012	21.3%	5.0%
Southland	13.7%	30.7%	\$55,811	1.6%	2.1%	86.3%	34.6%	\$29,725	8.6%	1.9%
Central	12.4%	16.2%	\$32,813	5.6%	1.7%	87.6%	11.8%	\$20,297	14.5%	6.2%
Rio Vista	11.8%	9.8%	\$21,548	6.4%	2.0%	88.2%	15.0%	\$19,617	21.4%	4.2%
Sunset	11.3%	36.9%	\$48,816	3.0%	2.4%	88.7%	29.4%	\$29,805	9.6%	2.0%
San Angelo	11.3%	23.4%	\$35,385	8.2%	3.5%	88.7%	16.9%	\$21,872	16.4%	5.4%
The Bluffs	11.2%	26.6%	\$59,375	10.5%	1.9%	88.8%	17.9%	\$19,946	15.5%	3.8%
Bentwood-Nasworthy	11.0%	51.5%	\$52,375	5.5%	3.4%	89.0%	38.5%	\$31,097	4.0%	1.5%
ASU-College Hills	10.7%	27.6%	\$26,184	3.2%	3.0%	89.3%	15.8%	\$13,535	18.1%	14.4%
Riverside	10.7%	15.2%	\$40,714	2.7%	4.3%	89.3%	8.5%	\$19,350	14.9%	7.0%
Reagan	10.3%	8.5%	\$17,402	7.4%	2.6%	89.7%	2.8%	\$15,050	24.6%	6.3%
Angelo Heights	10.2%	7.0%	\$22,560	7.8%	11.6%	89.8%	8.3%	\$17,894	14.6%	7.5%
Santa Rita	10.1%	40.6%	\$39,632	15.5%	4.2%	89.9%	30.3%	\$35,603	14.3%	2.9%
Belaire	9.8%	25.2%	\$32,500	3.3%	3.0%	90.2%	11.7%	\$16,735	21.4%	9.9%
Ft Concho	9.8%	14.7%	\$18,550	3.8%	3.8%	90.2%	7.1%	\$18,119	14.4%	6.1%
Lakeview	9.5%	13.0%	\$33,523	19.2%	7.5%	90.5%	9.3%	\$19,337	14.7%	4.2%
Vista del Arroyo	8.5%	37.9%	\$35,906	14.1%	4.5%	91.5%	23.1%	\$25,170	11.0%	3.0%
Blackshear-Downtown	7.6%	19.5%	\$14,122	28.3%	7.1%	92.4%	1.7%	\$12,365	38.0%	6.3%
Ft Concho-East	4.7%	9.5%	\$12,039	27.9%	5.4%	95.3%	5.7%	\$15,421	33.5%	9.3%

Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008-2012.

Senator Yarborough believed that veterans “should come home to classrooms, not to unemployment lines.” Evidence from the local community suggests we share in that belief in San Angelo. The data indicates that more than 23 percent of our city’s veterans have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher level of education. Veterans in nine of the 20 San Angelo census tract neighborhoods achieved degrees at rates that exceed this citywide level. The Bentwood-Nasworthy area led the way with 51.5 percent. Indeed, the educational achievements of the city’s veterans compare very favorably with the 16.9 percent level of higher education attainment among the non-veteran population.

The achievements of the local veteran population in higher education also pay off in the labor force, just as the architects of the GI Bill had intended. In the 2008-2012 period, for example, the median income for veterans living across San Angelo was \$35,385 compared to a median income of \$21,872 for the non-veteran populace.

On average, for every dollar a non-veteran received in San Angelo, a veteran living within the city had an additional 62 cents. In the Bluffs area, veterans earned an additional \$1.98 for every dollar a non-veteran earned. Fort Concho-East, where the 2008-2012 median income for veterans was only \$12,039, was the only San Angelo neighborhood where veterans did not have a premium on their income compared to the non-veteran residents of the area.

The ACS data for San Angelo also confirms that veterans run less risk of poverty and unemployment compared to the non-veteran population. Non-veterans had higher poverty rates than veterans between 2008 and 2012, not only across the city overall, but also within each of the 20 census tract neighborhoods. Citywide and in most (12 of 20) neighborhoods, veterans also had had lower unemployment rates. Interestingly, the eight neighborhoods where veterans had higher unemployment during 2008-2012 included some of the city’s highest income, lowest poverty areas such as the Bentwood-Nasworthy census tract, Southland, and Santa Rita.

Pathways to Progress

San Angelo has correctly received recognition as a military friendly community. In fact, there are only five of the 24 Texas metro areas with a larger percentage of veteran residents than the San Angelo Metropolitan Area. Texas also is military friendly based on the census data. All of the state's metro areas show the same pattern. More veterans have college degrees, higher median income, and lower rates of poverty and unemployment compared to non-veterans.

Ironically, it is not the goal of the GI Bill to elevate veterans over non-veterans. Rather, the aim is to ensure the social re-integration of those returning from war and to compensate for lost opportunities while in service. The results are a major success story. In fact, the story of the GI Bill in America demonstrates that we do know how to give people the hand-up needed for them to improve the quality of their own lives and increase their capacities to contribute to communities and society.

Still, the success of the GI Bill to elevate the veteran population raises a pivotal question, “what about the quality of life among vulnerable non-veterans in San Angelo and other communities?”

It is not a lack social policies and programs aiming to give the hands-up to struggling low-income and impoverished residents. On the contrary, affordable housing, workforce investment, Medicare and Medicaid, head start, and Pell Grants just begin to list initiatives to help lift vulnerable low-income and poor people in ways similar to the GI Bill strategy for veterans. Why are these not success stories?

Cynics about public assistance to the low-income and poor are likely to answer immediately that the difference lies in some flawed characteristics of these populations such as their lack of motivation, inadequate sense of personal responsibility, and failure to establish priorities for living. This kind of blaming the victim is actually quite widespread; so much, so that the level of public contempt may itself be a better answer to the question.

This Veterans Day we applaud and celebrate how the American public and its leaders did not turn backs on those who served the nation with great valor. At the same time, we should demand that leaders display the same level of patience and commitment to support quality of life programs for all our people. To paraphrase what Senator Yarborough liked to say, we need to put the jam jar on the lower shelf, so that the little people can reach it.

[Table of Contents](#)

A Community Divided

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

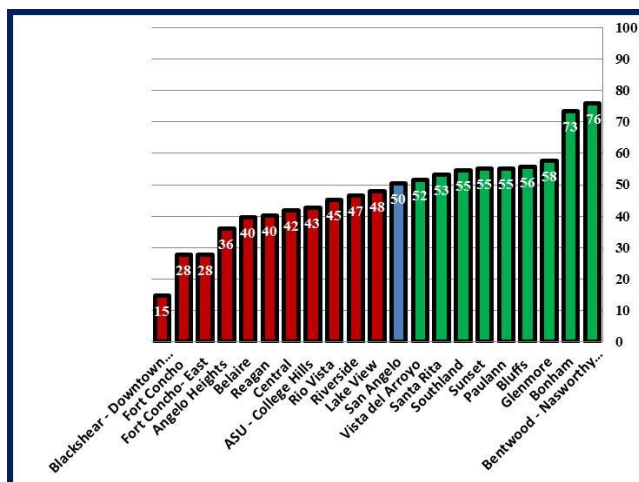
June 4, 2015

A year ago, PATHWAYS for June reported results from the fourth ASU Neighborhood Development Index. The article highlighted how few signs there were of closing inequality gaps between San Angelo's Blackshear and Downtown neighborhoods and the rest of the community. Now, the fifth yearly update reinforces the point.

The Neighborhood Development Index is a cornerstone of ongoing statistical tracking projects at Community Development Initiatives in the ASU Center for Community Wellness, Engagement, and Development. These projects continuously update more than 100 statistical indicators on quality of life in San Angelo.

We based the updated Neighborhood Index on 13 particular factors heavily focused on economic assets embedded in the people and households of the city's 20 census tracts. We score neighborhoods on a 100-point scale based on these factors. The city overall has a midway score of 50. Other scores reflect how far each neighborhood comes in above or below the city as a whole.

Figure 73: San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index



Most neighborhoods above the city score are geographically located to the south and west of the city center. Census tract 17.08 ranks first, as it did in previous editions of the Index. This area includes the neighborhoods around San Angelo Country Club, Bentwood, and Lake Nasworthy. Its score of 76 for this update is 26 points higher than the city overall.

At the other end of the scale, the Blackshear and Downtown neighborhoods combine to make up census tract 18. The updated score for this area is 15, placing it 35 points below the city. Financial and economic conditions in these neighborhoods are sharply distant from the overall city and top-rated Bentwood-Nasworthy area.

Pathways to Progress

For instance, financial analysts know households experience increased financial risk and instability as their housing costs rise above 30 percent of the household income. In census tract 18, San Angelo's Blackshear and Downtown areas, an average of 39 percent of households experienced housing costs of 30 percent or more in the years from 2009 to 2013. Across the city, by comparison, only three of every ten households carried this financial burden. Only two of ten in Bentwood-Nasworthy had such costs.

Over the same years, the median household income of \$18,613 in the Blackshear and Downtown neighborhoods was less than half (43%) the citywide median of \$42,385. A person earning the median wage of \$16,263 for employed workers in Blackshear-Downtown would take home only 72 cents-on-the-dollar compared workers across the city with median earnings of \$22,596. They would take home only 38 cents-on-the-dollar compared median wage of \$42,575 for workers in Bentwood-Nasworthy.

Other important factors affecting financial and economic sustainability of households and neighborhoods follow these earnings gaps. Low pay correlates to few, if any, employment benefits. Thus, in Blackshear and Downtown, an average of 45 percent of employed workers between 2009 and 2013 had no health insurance. The comparable citywide number was 25 percent. In Bentwood-Nasworthy, it was eight percent.

Likewise, the percentage of workers in Blackshear and Downtown who attained at least some college education (28%) was nearly 20 points lower than the city overall and 51 points under Bentwood-Nasworthy. The median value of people's homes in Blackshear and Downtown approximated \$58,200 between 2009 and 2013, which is nearly \$40,000 less than the citywide median and \$196,000 below Bentwood-Nasworthy.

These comparisons detail factors associated with a pattern of economic segregation in the community. We initially introduced this pattern last month in PATHWAYS by presenting original measures of segregation based on family income in San Angelo.

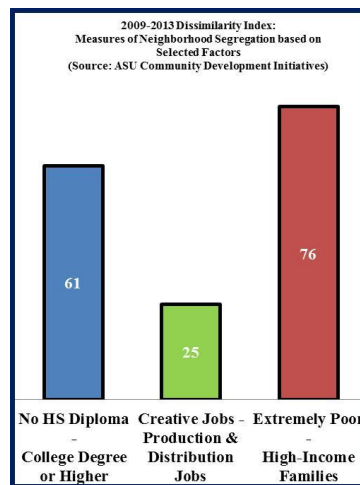
The Dissimilarity Index is a method of determining the unequal distribution of social groups across geographical areas like the census tracts of cities. It has been the most widely used statistic to measure intergroup segregation since the prominent sociologists Otis Dudley Duncan and Beverly Duncan published an analysis in 1955 establishing the Dissimilarity Index as the best of several approaches. No other method has achieved more widespread acceptance.

Although computation is complex, interpreting the Dissimilarity Index is straightforward. The method always results in a value between 0 and 100. Residentially segregated groups have high values.

Last month we reported a Dissimilarity measure of 76 for the level of segregation between high-income families (\$200,000 or more income) and extremely poor families (income under 50% of poverty level) in San Angelo. The statistic means that up to 76 percent of approximately 2,000 families in these income ranges would have to change residence in order to achieve a mix of the two groups in the city's neighborhoods.

We also extended the analysis of economic segregation based on our updated neighborhood development data. Specifically, we measured segregation based on education and occupation.

Figure 74: 2009-2013 Dissimilarity Index



First, we computed the Dissimilarity Index of segregation between workers who did not complete high school and those who attained a bachelor's or higher-level college degree. This produced a measure of 61; a strong level of segregation based on education.

We also computed a statistic on segregation between creative occupations (jobs requiring thinking, analysis, and problems solving skills) and production and distribution workers (jobs involving manufacturing, transportation, and sales distribution of communities). This resulted in a more modest level of segregation at 25.

These facts on local neighborhood development and segregation alert us that the community is not exempt from the rising issues of economic and social inequality in America. The disparity of economic assets embedded in the city's neighborhoods is deep and wide.

Moreover, levels of residential segregation are strong between people with the most education and highest-income compared to the least educated and lowest income residents. Despite valiant efforts by agencies and leaders across the city to solve economic and social problems, people with skills and resources to make community change too often are limited to insulated, superficial contacts with people who most need change.

Some citizens see inequality issues as easily solved if only poor, uneducated people would muster the personal responsibility and initiative to invest in themselves and their futures. The Equality of Opportunity Project based at Harvard University, however, sends a more challenging message that everyone in the local community needs to hear.

The Equality of Opportunity Project is focused on one central question that should be of interest to us all, how to improve future economic opportunities for low-income children in America? Lawrence Katz, the outstanding Harvard economist who also serves as Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research, heads the team of researchers.

It alarms us that a recent report by Katz's team pegged Tom Green County as a "pretty bad" place for children from poor families to realize improved income opportunities as they mature.

Pathways to Progress

The study estimates that prospects here for poor children are worse than about 72 percent of 2,478 urban counties across the nation.

Significantly, the researchers found that strong upward income mobility by poor children occurs in communities with less segregation by income and race, lower levels of income inequality, and better schools that inspire and challenge poor children.

Like many citizens of San Angelo, we want this city to be an exceptional community. However, an exceptional community must not restrict itself exclusively to the doctrine some prefer requiring poor residents in neighborhoods like Blackshear or Downtown to endure intergenerational poverty until somehow summoning the motivation to move up.

That dictum is not enough when a striving family in poverty cannot find work that supports them, has no means to see a doctor or fix the car after paying unaffordable rent on a substandard apartment, and watches the children slowly grow alienated from school on the way to dropping out.

Earnest efforts from the poor must receive support from a community that creates new ways to reduce neighborhood economic and social disparities, to improve schools for better service to all children, and to engage the poor to embrace them as valued neighbors and citizens. An exceptional community must constantly inspire and renew hope.

[Table of Contents](#)

Let's Get Serious About Reducing Poverty

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

December 3, 2015

World leaders gathered during September this year at the United Nations in New York to adopt an Agenda for Sustainable Development by 2030. In part, the summit celebrated progress toward reaching an earlier set of United Nations goals adopted to tackle the global challenge of extreme poverty in the 21st century.

Developed by the United Nations in the year 2000, the Millennium Development Goals had established measurable objectives for reducing extreme poverty, hunger, disease, and other obstacles. The specific goal, focused on developing countries, was to cut the number of people whose 1990 daily income was less than \$1.25 by half in 2015.

In concert with the September gathering this year, the United Nations reported, “Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015.” The 47 percent of the world’s population living on less than \$1.25 per day in 1990 had fallen to 14 percent in 2015. Most of the progress, the report assured, had occurred since the year 2000.

Buoyed by the progress, this year’s Agenda for Sustainable Development extended the older Millennium Development Goals. The new set of measureable objectives, called Sustainable Development Goals, highlight an agenda that urges change in all countries. The United States and the other 192 members of the United Nations unanimously agreed upon the goals.

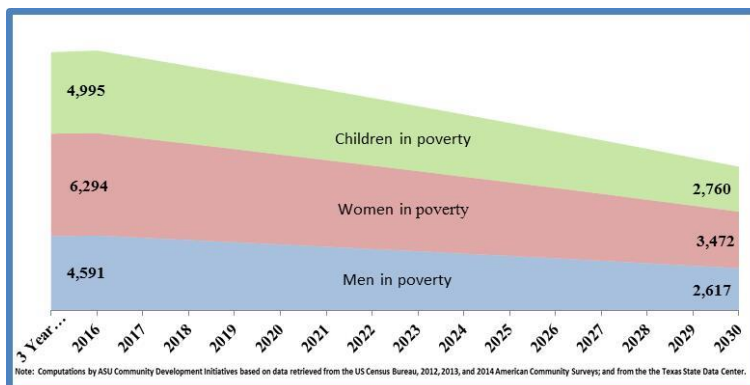
Because this month ushers in a season of hope, we decided to see what change the new Sustainable Development Goals envision by applying just one of them to our local community. One measureable objective for 2030 is to reduce at least by half the current proportion of men, women, and children living in poverty using each country’s particular national definition.

In the United States, the Census Bureau is responsible for following the number of Americans living in poverty. The Bureau determines this by comparing the pre-tax income of households against a threshold set at three times the cost of a minimum food diet with adjustments for household size, composition, and the age of the householder. The Bureau counts men, women, and children living in households below the threshold as living in poverty.

Over the three years from 2012 to 2014, the Census Bureau estimated that an average of 15,880 or 14.6 percent of residents in Tom Green County lived in poverty. This included 4,591 men, 6,294 women, and 4,995 children.

Using these averages as a starting point and taking expected population growth into account, we calculate that the local community can do its part to reach the Sustainable Development Goal for 2030 by reducing the number of men in poverty to 2,617, the number of women in poverty to 3,472, and the number of children in poverty to 2,760. These reductions would bring the Tom Green County poverty rate down to 7.3 percent of 121,881 residents projected by the State Demographer’s Office to be living in Tom Green County in 2030.

Figure 75: Sustainable Development Poverty Level Goals



Reducing poverty by these magnitudes, however, requires the local community to take actions that will lift more than 7,000 people out of poverty by 2030. Some previous articles from the Standard Times provide perspective.

Michael Kelly reported on a development in the September 26 edition of the Standard Times that is sure to be a banner headline for many local leaders reflecting on the community's accomplishments as New Year's Day draws near. Under a headline reading, "Area ranks No. 2 in U.S.," Kelly reported newly released economic data showing the San Angelo metropolitan area grew by 11.4 percent from a \$4.3 billion gross domestic product in 2013 to \$4.8 billion in 2014.

Ironically, just a few months earlier in June, our Pathways column reported updated data from the Census Bureau indicating that "Vastly different neighborhoods highlight huge local inequality" in San Angelo. Then, in the following month's Pathways, we reported data from a nationwide Equality of Opportunity Project at Harvard University showing that "Tom Green County is below the average of counties in the study at helping poor children climb the income ladder." A rising economy, even one racing at a record-setting pace, does not guarantee, as the saying goes, to lift all boats. The evidence in San Angelo is that too many are not.

Those falling through the cracks, moreover, are exactly the people who must rise from poverty to move forward toward the Sustainable Development Goal for 2030. Among an average 2,744 Tom Green County households in poverty during that record-setting period of local economic growth, for instance, 59 percent were female-headed households. Sixty-seven percent of nearly 8,000 people over age 24 living in poverty had no more than a high school education, and Hispanic men, women, and children comprised 49 percent of the poor over those breakneck years of economic growth.

This month ushers in a season of hope, and we have the audacity to hope the local community takes new steps forward toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goal to cut poverty in half by 2030.

Some citizens, we know, view the prospect of reducing poverty in a way that recalls the nineteenth century German critic Friedrich Nietzsche, "In reality, hope is the worst of all evils, because it prolongs man's torments." We choose the advice of Martin Luther King, Jr., "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." [Table of Contents](#)

HOUSEHOLDS OF THE CONCHO VALLEY

College Education Crucial, Not Cheap (September 5, 2012): College tuition costs today are higher than ever and continue to grow each year. In 2010, the majority of graduating students (57%) at Texas public universities graduated with significant debt. The average debt reached as high as \$17,000 for students graduating from some Texas universities. At ASU, about 36 percent of the graduating class left with an average of \$10,712 in debt.

Overcoming San Angelo's Housing Hurdles (December 5, 2012): More than 14,000 renter households make up some 41 percent of the 35,258 occupied households in San Angelo according to Census estimates. The estimated median rent is approximately \$702 per month. For this median amount to be "affordable," a household would have to earn at least \$13.50 per hour, or \$28,080 per year. Some 47 percent of the city's renter households have incomes below this level.

Avoiding Complacency (February 6, 2013): The West Texas Violence Index (WTVI) measures and compares the level of violence in San Angelo and three comparable West Texas cities: Abilene, Midland, and Odessa. It also compares these cities of West Texas to the state as a whole. The 16 factors in the index cover crime, suicides, traffic accidents, poisonings, family violence, and violence experienced by juveniles. Results for 2010 indicate that San Angelo is the second most violent of the four cities based on all 16 indicators in the WTVI.

Area Public Transportation Must Prepare for Future Needs (October 3, 2013): The relatively short commutes for the San Angelo workforce may help explain why less than one-half percent of the regional workforce uses public transit to go to work. This low percentage, however, does not mean that there is a lack of demand for regional public transit services. More evidence, in fact, indicates an increasingly diverse set of demands for public transit service emerging throughout the region.

Hunger in the Land of Plenty (April 3, 2014): About 11,000 residents in San Angelo's food desert neighborhoods (about one-third) are low-income individuals located more than mile from a grocery. These individuals directly experience the barriers to obtaining healthy foods that arise from the combination of scarce income and distance from the source. The fact that about 8,500 of them (approximately 79%) are vulnerable children (under age 18) or seniors (age 65 and over) adds to the challenge.

Seeing a Pattern Here (June 5, 2014): San Angelo's City's Development Services division launched a new Development Task Force as an on-going opportunity for greater dialogue about improvements to City processes like zoning, infrastructure development, building regulation, and code enforcement. This start, however, was just an initial step toward opening new pathways for expanded citizen engagement in the development of the community and its neighborhoods.

Many Struggle to Keep a Roof over Their Heads (March 5, 2015): The fact that San Angelo renters in 2013 were beyond affordable cost levels in half of the 20 census tracts of the city made renting more difficult than homeownership. Some neighborhoods saw slight improvements in renter affordability since 2010, but gross rents continued to exceed 30% of the renters' median income in 2013.

Pathways to Progress

[**Figures behind Tax Burden**](#) (*November 5, 2015*): In 2013, 13 of San Angelo's 20 census tract neighborhoods had higher sales tax burdens than the six percent liability for households in the city overall. Mirroring the Institute on Taxation findings, the local results show that the sales tax burden takes the greatest share of income (13.1%) from the city's lowest income neighborhood where the average household income was \$26,833 in 2013.

[**Solving Social Security**](#) (*May 12, 2016*): Census data show just how vital social security benefits are for the financial stability of families in San Angelo and the Concho Valley. For instance, 68.5 percent of 22,643 families living in San Angelo did not receive social security benefits or any other form of federal cash assistance. The poverty rate among these families was 14.4 percent.

[**Grading our Schools**](#) (*November 3, 2016*): The average base salary for teachers at the 17 SAISD elementary schools in 2014-2015 was \$45,797. The average in schools serving the other West Texas cities was \$48,436. The difference is 5.4 percent. In addition, the differences between cities are largest for the least experienced elementary teachers.

[Table of Contents](#)

College Education Crucial, Not Cheap

*Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones
September 5, 2012*

Eighty is a number to remember. In America, that percentage marks how many the median earnings of Americans who have college degrees exceed those who have only a high school education. Interestingly, the number is even larger in San Angelo according to 2010 Census Bureau estimates. Here, people over age 24 with college degrees have median earnings that are 89 percent above those only having high school diplomas.

The earnings gap between high school educated workers and those who complete college is large. Importantly, the difference has been expanding for decades. Other numbers also reflect the powerful incentive this creates for students to go to college. According to a Georgetown University study on The Economic Value of College Majors, the proportion of workers with Bachelor's degrees in the US labor force grew from 28 percent in 1992 to 34 percent in 2009. San Angelo appears to lag on this. In 2010, according to Census estimates, only 20 percent of local workers in the 25-64 age-brackets have college degrees.

More than 9,000 San Angelo residents have enrolled in colleges or graduate schools. They constitute nearly 13 percent of the city's adult population and the vast majority of them (about 85%) are attending public universities. Most of them (about 7 out of every 10) are young adults in the traditional college-going age range between 18 and 24. Many of them attend ASU.

Along with some 23 million adults across the nation – including about 1.5 million Texans – these local residents know that access to college is important. Business and community leaders also know its significance for economic and social development.

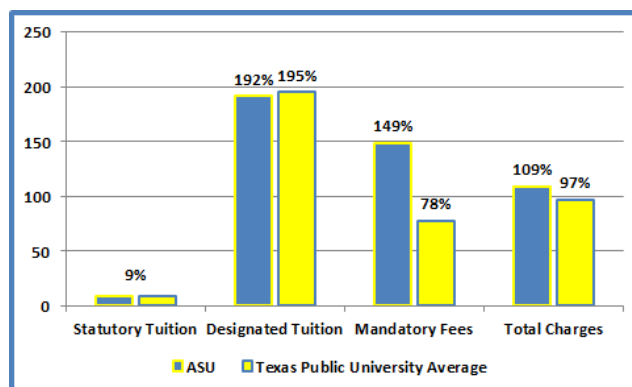
Yet, college tuition costs today are higher than ever and continue to grow each year. In 2010, the majority of graduating students (57%) at Texas public universities left the hallowed halls with significant debt. The average debt reached as high as \$17,000 for students graduating from some Texas universities. At ASU, about 36 percent of the graduating class left with an average of \$10,712 in debt.

ASU traditionally keeps tuition and fees below the average level for other Texas public universities. Even with recent increases, ASU's \$3,750 tuition and fees for a full-time undergraduate student this fall semester is only \$52 dollars above the Texas average of \$3,698.

Still, increases at ASU are faster than other Texas schools. Since 2003, average tuition and fees at Texas public universities increased by 91 percent. ASU's charges more than doubled, climbing by 109 percent, in the same time. The year 2003 is significant in this picture because that fall was the first time university governing boards could directly change rates under the mandate of the Texas Legislature's deregulation of higher education tuition.

The chart shows the percentages of increase in the components of college charges from 2003 to 2012. Data comes from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Figure 76: Percentages of increase in the Components of College Charges



Three main components make up the standard charges that students pay. Each of these components is rising at a different pace. “Statutory tuition,” is a charge set by the Legislature and paid uniformly by all public university students in the state, regardless of which school they attend. Since 2003, statutory tuition increased by nine percent from \$690 to \$750 per semester for a full time student.

“Designated tuition” is the charge the Legislature deregulated in 2003. University governing boards determine it and it varies from one institution to another based on their internal analysis of differing needs. The average designated tuition in Texas climbed from \$625 per semester for a full time student in 2003 to \$1,845 now, an increase of 195 percent. In the same time, designated tuition at ASU grew from \$600 to \$1,750 for a 192 percent increase.

“Mandatory fees” are the final set of charges to college students. Some of these are fixed at the state level (medical services fee, for example) while others are determined by institutions (library fee, for example). While fees are generally the smaller portion of total charges paid by university students, they have been rising rapidly nonetheless. At ASU, mandatory fees grew from \$503 in 2003 to \$1,250 now, a surge of 149 percent. The average increase at Texas schools during the same time is 78 percent (from \$619 in 2002 to \$1,103 now).

These are stunning numbers about rising costs, especially in light of the growing importance of a college education and its impact on earnings. The numbers are particularly disturbing in light of a growing number of reports about stagnation, even decline, of income in families.

Just this June, for example, the Federal Reserve Board reported that median income of families across the nation fell by almost eight percent between 2007 and 2010. San Angelo area families were somewhat steadier as Census estimates show a modest gain of 1.6 percent in median family income over that time.

In any case, the math shows a very challenging situation with local families having slow or stagnant income increases while facing rapidly rising costs at universities, including ASU. What it means for a local family of four with a median income of \$59,555 is that their son or daughter starting full time at ASU this fall – but living at home – could face bills mounting to \$15,000 for the school year. The student likely qualifies for grant or scholarship assistance arranged by the university for some \$1,500 to \$6,464.

Pathways to Progress

That leaves a net cost ranging between \$8,536 and \$13,500. This amount, in turn, is the equivalent of 15-23 percent of the student's family income. To raise it, the student may work, take out student loans, or search for help from other scholarship-granting sources. The parents, too, might work extra or shell some out from savings or other assets. The family, probably, will do a combination of these moves. Then, they can all look forward to the next school year.

Beginning with the fall of 2009, ASU took steps to help alleviate the growing burden of college costs by implementing the Blue and Gold Guarantee financial aid program. The program is for Texans who enter the university as first-time freshmen from families with a gross income of \$40,000 or less. The program pays the full cost of tuition and fees.

Giving scholarships to college students is a favored activity of philanthropic entities ranging from neighborhood Lions Clubs to large trusts and foundations. In fact, there is a wave of so-called "college promise" programs striving to provide scholarships to all qualified young people in their respectively targeted states or local cities and towns. Many of these see the rapid rise of college costs as both a call to action for their programs and a challenge threatening to limit their ambitions.

The generosity of scholarship giving is a noble thing. It is true, as well, that ASU and other public universities must become more effective at taking actions to trim cost without compromising the essential higher education functions of preparing leaders and other skilled people needed to carry communities and society forward.

Still, all cost trimming and noble scholarship giving cannot reverse the basic problem posed by the underlying trend of college outstripping family and household income levels in the manner of the past years. The escalator of college costs puts a fundamental decision into motion. What is a college education worth to students and their families, as well as to communities and society?

One option for deciding is to continue down the familiar path set into motion by deregulation in 2003. This path leads shifting ever-greater portions of cost to students and their families in the form of rising tuition and fees while pushing to minimize public funding on the view that tax dollars merely subsidize benefits for students acting as private consumers of services. In fact, the 38 percent of all university operating budgets that Texas taxpayers funded in 2004 fell to 31 percent by 2011. The portion funded by students and parents grew in the same time from 24 to 29 percent.

John F. Kennedy highlighted the alternative in 1961 as a new President took a special message to Congress to garner support for his education plan. "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education," Kennedy said in opening. The alternative option restores public investment in higher education to provide a fair combination between public funding and private tuition or fee charges. The option appreciates Kennedy's further assertion that "our colleges and universities represent our ultimate educational resource" in a partnership, that benefits both the individual student and the public interest.

There will be no single "decider" on these options. Students, families, universities, legislators, and scholarship-givers will all play important roles. Nevertheless, these are the main options. What is decided will determine how widely the college door is kept open to aspiring students, as

Pathways to Progress

well as how effectively the universities perform their functions that are essential to communities and society.

[Table of Contents](#)

Overcoming San Angelo's Housing Hurdles

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

December 5, 2012

President George W. Bush authorized the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) in 2008. The law established a permanent federal fund under the Housing and Economic Recovery Act to provide states with funds that local communities can match to invest in increased supply or preservation of rental housing for extremely low-income families.

Creating public-private partnerships to generate investments in construction of decent housing with rental costs that are affordable for the lowest income Americans has garnered significant bipartisan support over the years. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for administering the NHTF at the national level. Texas and other states receive funding based on population and need. States then distribute the funds to local communities that apply and are willing to meet matching dollar requirements.

As a matter of principle, most local property owners and tenants, as well as San Angelo residents of all political persuasion, generally agree that households should have access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing. Yet many renters in the city find that getting and keeping an affordable apartment is a vexing experience.

A basic standard for determining whether rents are “affordable” is the 30 percent rule. By this rule, an apartment is affordable when housing costs (the amount of rent plus necessary utilities and services paid by the tenant) do not exceed 30 percent of the household's income. As costs exceed the 30 percent level by higher-and-higher amounts, the less affordable an apartment is for the people residing there.

A full one-quarter of all San Angelo renter households spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs according to the most recent data from Census Bureau's American Community Survey for 2011. The same data indicates that slightly less than half of the renters in San Angelo have housing costs that are affordable by the standard of the 30 percent rule.

More than 14,000 renter households make up some 41 percent of the 35,258 occupied households in San Angelo according to Census estimates. The estimated median rent is approximately \$702 per month. For this median amount to be “affordable,” a household would have to earn at least \$13.50 per hour, or \$28,080 per year. Some 47 percent of the city's renter households have incomes below this level.

A person working at minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) will have to work for 74 hours per week to have enough to afford housing priced at the median rent level. The fact is that only about seven percent of occupied rental units in the city would allow extremely low-income minimum wage level households to achieve an affordable housing cost, and a smaller number (about 3%) of unoccupied units at any given time are in the price range of these tenants. Local rent costs and a small number of adequate units at affordable levels have presented significant impediments to housing for the lowest income households of San Angelo for years in the past. Obstacles may be aggravated in the months and years ahead by oncoming demand for rental housing spurred by developments in the energy sector.

Pathways to Progress

In some ways, these obstacles facing the lowest income local households are surprising. After all, many live in San Angelo because of its affordability and low cost-of-living. The Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University currently estimates that the average price of homes sold in San Angelo during this year will come in at approximately \$141,300. The corresponding estimate for Texas overall is \$205,800. Thus, the best available data show that San Angelo homebuyers pay an average of \$64,500 less than other Texans do. Even as home prices fluctuate up and down over time, this “discount” for buying a home in San Angelo has averaged more than \$63,000 during the years since 2000.

The outstanding progress of San Angelo’s affordable housing coalition is another reason why the impediments to low-income rentals jump out as a surprise. The City’s community development departments have accomplished amazing improvements over recent years by partnering with organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Helping Hands, and West Texas Organizing Strategies. Together, the coalition has produced about 100 affordable housing units for low-to-moderate income homebuyers since 2006. Adding more than 680 housing renovation projects, residents have worked with the coalition to revitalize neighborhoods and virtually eliminate blighted areas within the city.

One of the non-profit members of the affordable housing coalition, Galilee Community Development Corporation (GCDC), has completed construction of 17 new affordable homes and has three additional ones near completion. This year, GCDC is also playing a lead role in a unique project to help alleviate San Angelo’s surprisingly small number of decent and affordable rental options for low-to-moderate income families and households.

The project is building NoAH Estates to bring 36 new single-family homes into the rental market for low or moderate-income renters. Private investors – not public funds -- are financing this project located in the city’s Blackshear neighborhood. The investors benefit from tax incentives under the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, another one of those bipartisan supported national initiatives.

A more hidden element of San Angelo’s challenging rental picture for the lowest income residents is that tenants and landlords at this level have few options when problems develop between them. The routine issues that most tenants and landlords above the lowest income levels experience from time-to-time usually require little more than some firm and clear communication to resolve.

Ultimately, renters with sufficient income resources are able to obtain safe and affordable housing alternatives when services are unsuitable or unsatisfactory for their needs. Likewise, the majority of the city’s landlords maintain quality rental properties that readily attract needed occupants. It is difficult for those who experience the routine issues and inconveniences of renting to comprehend the dogged and humiliating nature of disputes that sometimes develop between the city’s lowest income renters and their landlords where options are limited. Landlords stressed to collect rent from troubled households with few means may gravitate toward unpleasant options leading to reduction or neglect of quality service and expensive, chaotic eviction notices. Tenants shuddering to meet necessities may lash out because they feel trapped or violated.

Pathways to Progress

The reputation of all landlords is suspect because of a few disputes that encourage the stereotype of slumlords forcing tenants to live in degraded conditions and face heartless evictions. The image of all tenants, in turn, is also suspect when any renter chronically fails to pay up or needlessly damages rental property and unleashes dehumanizing stereotypes of the irresponsible and undeserving poor.

ASU's Community Development Initiatives is collaborating with the City of San Angelo as well as with landlords, realtors, and other key local housing stakeholders to help alleviate disputes involving the community's lowest income tenants. The San Angelo Rental Housing Mediation Services (SARHMS) is a pilot project that takes a two-pronged approach.

First, as the project title implies, SARHMS has a process to help mediate disputes. Recognizing that few tenants and landlords will voluntarily seek mutual agreements to resolve their issues, the SARHMS mediation process seeks nevertheless to expand options. It does so by offering the city's lowest income renters -- and, if willing, their landlords -- an opportunity to have complaints documented and reviewed by a knowledgeable panel that will recommend pathways to remedy the issues.

Additionally, SARHMS provides public education and information as an approach to preventing problems between low-income tenants and landlords. The project is organizing a series of public forums where interested landlords, tenants, and citizens can hear local legal experts, building code regulators, and leading property owners and managers discuss a variety of housing issues involving the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords under fair housing laws and ordinances.

SARHMS is also accumulating a series of handbooks and handouts to help inform individuals about housing barriers that affect the poor, different types of affordable housing, tips for contacting property owners, and other useful materials for identifying and solving rental-housing issues affecting low-income tenants and their landlords.

[Table of Contents](#)

Avoiding Complacency

*Laurence F. Jones, Kenneth L. Stewart, and Susan McLane
February 6, 2013*

Nelson Mandela, a person who knew from life experience, said of violence: “We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear.” Yet, in recent America, Florida teenager Trayvon Martin was shot to death; 12 mostly young lives were lost during a shooting spree in a Colorado movie theater; and 20 students and six adults were slain in a Connecticut elementary school. Accounts of violence dominate the news in America.

In Texas, there were more than 4,200 crimes for every 100,000 people residing in the state in 2010. Houston Police Department responded to more than 137,000 criminal offenses resulting in a rate of over 6,000 crimes per 100,000 residents. Closer to home, San Angelo Police responded to more than 4,400 crimes in 2010, but since the population is under 100,000, the resulting crime rate was 4,802 per 100,000 people. Crime affects people living in bustling urban centers, but it also burdens residents who choose the more calm environs of West Texas cities.

The FBI tracks seven basic crimes reported to various police authorities each year in its Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). The media regularly used these reports to provide information on the crime rate of the nation and its many local communities.

Analyzing crimes reported to police is one way to examine the extent of violence in a community. Crime, though, is not the only form of violence that affects the lives of local residents. The impact of motor vehicle fatalities, child or elder abuse, and suicides are some of other faces of violence that take a toll.

Because it takes many forms and affects many lives, the team at ASU’s Community Development Initiatives decided to create a 16-indicator index of violence using data from the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Department of Family and Protective Services, the Department of State Health Services, and other similar sources.

The West Texas Violence Index (WTVI) measures and compares the level of violence in San Angelo and three comparable West Texas cities: Abilene, Midland, and Odessa. It also compares these cities of West Texas to the state as a whole. The 16 factors in the index cover crime, of course, but also personal events such as suicides, traffic accidents, and poisoning; familial violence; and violence experienced by juveniles.

Using the year 2000 as the baseline, we used a 100-point scale to score each location based on its annual results on the 16 indicators. This method allows us to examine and compare change for each location for any given year during the decade. One of the strengths of this method is that it goes beyond specific, often dramatic, instances to review the many faces of how violence in communities change over time.

Results for 2010, the most recent year of available data, indicate that San Angelo is the second most violent of the four cities based on all 16 indicators in the WTVI. Only Abilene shows a higher level of violence on the combination of 16 factors. Three of the cities – Odessa, San

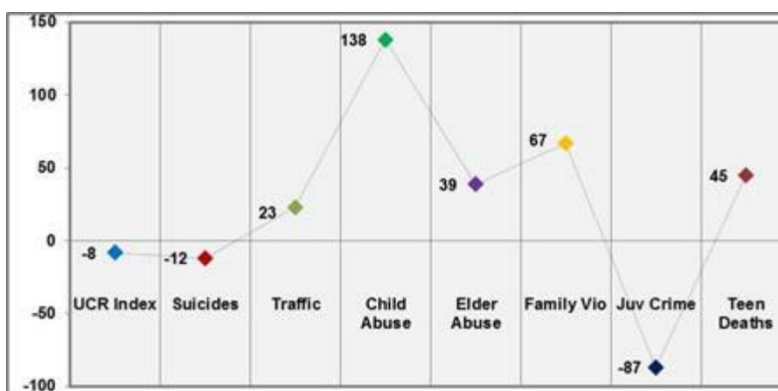
Pathways to Progress

Angelo, and Abilene – display higher overall levels of violence than the state as a whole. The data say Midland is the least violent of the four West Texas cities, the only one with a lower violence level than the state. To download a complete report on the WTVI, follow the link accompanying this article.

A closer focus on trends in various forms of violence in San Angelo reveals a conflicting picture. We use the word “conflicting” because there are signs of progress and regression at the same time.

As depicted in the chart below, San Angelo residents and local police can take satisfaction in the eight percent reduction in the number of UCR crimes per 100,000 residents since the year 2000. Specifics on just one of the seven UCR crimes not shown in the chart indicate that locals who struggle and suffer with the horrors of rape should take heart from the 43 percent decrease since 2000 in the rate of that crime.

Figure 77: Uniform Crime Report Indicators



At the same time, a more sobering fact is that San Angelo has a higher overall UCR crime rate than Abilene, Midland, or Odessa. This has occurred in part by the city’s 23 percent increase in the rate of robberies, burglaries, and auto thefts since the year 2000. This is our conflicting picture: while we have a declining overall crime rate in San Angelo, we cannot boast of it when we compare the rate with other West Texas cities.

The chart presents some other “good news” and “bad news” scenarios as well. For example, Tom Green County experienced a 12 percent decline in the number of suicides per 100,000 residents. On the other hand, there was a 23 percent increase in the number of traffic fatalities per 100,000 residents in the same period.

In addition, the county saw a drop in the juvenile violent crime rate by 87 percent since 2000. At the same time, however there was a 45 percent increase in the number of violent deaths per 100,000 teens between the ages of 15 and 19.

One area where we cannot find much “good” in the WTVI results for San Angelo is in the family violence indicators. Since the year 2000, Tom Green County has reported increases in confirmed child abuse cases per 1,000 children under the age of 18 (138%), validated abuse cases per 1,000 elder and disabled residents (39%), and police reported incidents of family violence per 100,000

Pathways to Progress

residents (67%). These results are especially troubling considering how families sustain communities.

Mahatma Gandhi was among the world's deepest thinkers about the nature of violence and its consequences. Of non-violence, Gandhi said, a "double faith" is required: one that is recognized by many others is faith in God. Fewer people know, as Gandhi did foremost, that non-violence requires "also faith in man."

[Table of Contents](#)

Area Public Transportation Must Prepare for Future Needs

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

October 3, 2013

Commuters in major US metropolitan areas spent 5.5 billion hours sitting in traffic during 2011 according to the latest Urban Mobility Report from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. This is equivalent to the total time that businesses and individuals spend filing their annual tax returns.

Adding to this aggravation of big city traffic is an estimated 2.9 billion gallons of fuel used to move only feet or inches, plus the other unnecessary operating costs for those 18 wheelers that loomed around you last time you were jammed up at the Dallas mix-master. The Transportation Institute pegged the overall cost of lost time and wasted fuel from urban traffic congestion at \$121 billion in 2011. At least \$10 billion of that total accrued from standing traffic in Texas cities.

No doubt, that many residents count the relatively tame traffic in San Angelo and the wide-open spaces of the outlying region as one of the joys of living in the Concho Valley. According to Census Bureau estimates, the mean commute time for San Angelo residents is 15.6 minutes, which is considerably lower than the national average of 25.4 minutes.

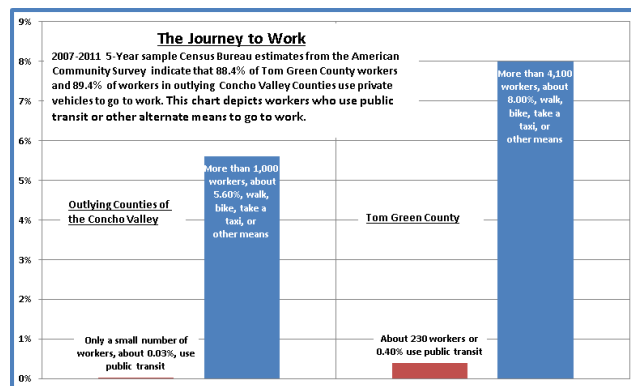
Folks might travel from ranches to the town or city for work around the various counties of the region. Irion County residents – many commuting to San Angelo -- have the longest average of 26.7 minutes. Those in Sutton County drive the least with an average commute of 12.4 minutes. The average commute time for the Concho Valley outside of Tom Green County is 17.6 minutes.

These relatively short commutes for the local workforce may help explain why less than one-half percent (0.4%) of the regional workforce uses public transit to go to work. This low percentage, however, hardly means that there is a lack of demand for regional public transit services. More evidence, in fact, indicates an increasingly diverse set of demands for public transit service emerging throughout the region.

A closer look at this Census data, for example, indicates that as many as 4,100 (or 8%) of Tom Green County workers do not travel to jobs either by public transit or private autos, trucks and vans. These individuals report going to work by walking, biking, taking taxicabs, and other alternative modes of transportation. Another 1,000 workers (5.6%) in the outlying counties of the Concho Valley also report traveling to work by these alternative means.

Of course, a small number of these individuals may prefer walking or biking to work sites that may be only a short distance from their residence. Many more, however, are part of a 2012 survey of local transportation needs conducted by ASU's Community Development Initiatives that uncovered numerous indications showing the public transit system lacks capacity to serve effectively vulnerable populations such as youth, students, seniors, individuals with special needs, and low-income residents.

Figure 78: The Journey to Work



Because of that 2012 survey, Concho Valley Transit District (CVTD) planners collaborated with Community Development Initiatives to conduct a focus group series to assess unmet demand for CVTD transit services throughout the region. Current public transit users voiced their satisfaction with the affordability of rides and other features of the system.

Conversely, focus group participants frequently echoed concerns identified from the previous survey study that there are not enough routes and time schedules to meet their transit needs. These basic limitations in service capacity also help explain low usage of public transit in the region. Seemingly, thousands of residents turn to walking, biking and taxi cabs in part because public transit capacity falls short.

Especially disquieting and heart wrenching in the focus groups were concerns expressed in several sessions that public transit facilities and buses are not adequately accessible for those with special needs. Focus group participants told of experiences where drivers were not familiar with ADA requirements and times when wheelchair lifts did not function.

Across the focus group sessions, comments from participants corroborate that many Concho Valley residents do not have available transportation that could enable them to live more fulfilling lives and improve the health and vitality of local communities at the same time. The focus groups validate the Census data indications that thousands of regional residents find it difficult to get to town to shop, meet medical appointments, commute to better jobs, and engage with friends or important educational, civic, and community events and activities.

Too often, the limited capacity of the regional public transit system is mistaken for inefficiency or ineffective management of the system. Perhaps this misperception arises because so many of us enjoy the unhindered convenience of personal cars and pickup trucks providing lifelines to all those joys of living in the Concho Valley.

In reality, standard efficiency and effectiveness measures maintained by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) show that public transit in the Concho Valley is operated both efficiently and effectively compared to other systems serving a city the size of San Angelo, or a sparsely populated rural land area of more than 15,000 square miles.

CVTD provides service to San Angelo at a lower expense per passenger-trip (\$9.06/trip in 2011) and a lower expense per mile of travel (\$3.65/mile in 2011) than the average for Texas cities of

Pathways to Progress

similar size. Despite the expanse of CVTD's rural transit services, it also delivers more passengers per 100 miles of travel (23 passengers) than the average (17 passengers) for Texas rural areas.

The key shortcoming of public transit in the Concho Valley is not inefficiency or ineffectiveness from an economic management standpoint. Instead, it is lack of capacity to meet growing and emerging demands on the system.

To be sure, planners and managers must strive to maximize current capacity through flexible routing and scheduling innovations, as well as by attracting additional riders onto the existing system by enhancing public information and awareness about available services. The public transit system also can build some additional capacity by reaching out to coordinate with alternate providers such as taxi and shuttle services.

Still, no matter how helpful added efficiencies and outreach steps like these may be, truly building capacity to meet the new and growing demand for regional public transit requires additional investment from communities. Only investment can enable extension of transit routes, additional routes, and higher frequency time schedules.

The San Angelo Chamber of Commerce pointed the way to building some local public transit capacity when it lead the effort to organize a community coalition that pooled resources and shared the cost of providing additional service to help Goodfellow AFB personnel in training get off base on weekends. In the end, public transit is a community asset that requires the understanding that we are all in it together.

Sharing the responsibility to address emerging transit demands is, in fact, the way other Texas communities are stepping up. The Capital Area Rural Transportation System serving 169 communities in a 7,500 square mile area stretching from Marble Falls to La Grange supplemented its federal and state public transit allocations with an 84 percent investment from local community sources in 2011. The average local investment in rural transit systems across the state that year was 52 percent according to TxDOT data. The Concho Valley's local investment level was 41 percent.

Many new public transit demands are emerging with the growth of college student populations at ASU and Howard College, shifting labor force needs sprouting in energy and spreading to other economic sectors, and reshaping of physical and mental health services. To sustain the benefits of these and other positive changes, San Angelo and the Concho Valley will must find ways to step up from 41 percent to finance the capacity of a community asset like public transit.

[Table of Contents](#)

Hunger in the Land of Plenty

Kenneth L. Stewart

April 3, 2014

Helder Camara was Archbishop of the Brazilian Diocese of Olinda and Recife from 1964 to 1985. At a time when the poor were rapidly bloating urban centers across the third world and Americans were hardly aware of such poverty, Camara famously gave a challenging voice. “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food,” he said, “they call me a communist.”

The ingeniousness of the Archbishop’s teaching is so subtle it deserves saying directly. Despite high moral praise for those who minister to the most basic of individual needs, Camara discovered that pushing hard questions about the system of food production and marketing on behalf of the poor risks perception as the enemy. Today it remains immensely more difficult to examine how communities fail the poor than it is to organize action for charity and handouts.

That is why the West Texas Hunger Summit last week was like fresh air. Organized by the San Angelo Regional Office of the Texas Hunger Initiative, their ultimate goal is to achieve “food security” by ensuring that every individual in Texas has access to three healthy meals a day, seven days a week. Because charity gets part way to the goal, they provide the leadership sustaining San Angelo’s Kids Eat-FREE volunteer program that has given more than 130,000 meals to local children over the past four years during summer months when school is out.

Beyond the giving of food, however, what impresses me about the Hunger Initiative is that they do more than ask why the poor have inadequate access to food. They engage action at the local, state, and national levels to affect food policy, encourage public education, community organizing, and local community development for food security. Consequently, charitable feeding campaigns did not dominate the agenda for the Hunger Summit. Instead, it featured an asset-based approach to community development, various grassroots organizing strategies, and examination of systemic access barriers to nutritious food such as the payday lending traps and food deserts.

The latter topic is important for our city. Food deserts moved onto the national agenda in 2009 when the Economic Research Service at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported to Congress on access barriers to nutritious foods that are a factor in obesity and diet-related diseases, which are exploding in the country. The report identified a small percentage of low-income households and populations across the nation living far from a supermarket or grocery store and lacking easy access to transportation. Using the 2000 Census as a baseline, the USDA estimated 13.5 million Americans lived in 6,500 census tracts that were food deserts with insufficient access to healthy diets.

Later USDA estimates suggest as many as 23 million Americans may live in food deserts. Making revisions based on the 2010 Census, the USDA also identified two distinct but overlapping types of food desert tracts across the nation.

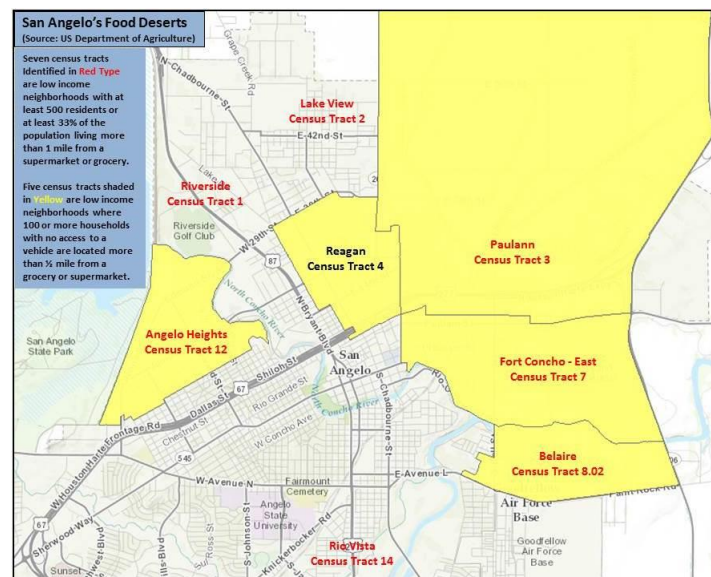
There is one essential criterion for either type. A census tract, regardless of which type it is, must be designated a low-income area by virtue of having either a median family income below 80

Pathways to Progress

percent of the city's overall median, or a poverty rate of at least 20 percent of the population. In addition, for the first type of food desert, at least 500 persons, or at least 33 percent of the population, must live more than a mile from a supermarket or full-service grocery store.

San Angelo has seven census tract neighborhoods identified as food deserts of this first type. Angelo Heights, Riverside, Lake View, Paulann, Fort Concho-East, Belaire, and Rio Vista tracts are each low-income neighborhoods in the city where at least a third of population (or, alternatively, at least 500 people) reside more than a mile from a grocery.

Figure 79: San Angelo Food Deserts



Overall, more than 33,000 residents live in these seven food desert neighborhoods of the first type. Of course, many of these (about two-thirds) are not low-income individuals, nor are they all located more than a mile from a grocery market with available healthy food choices. They merely happen to live in an area of the city where significant numbers of people are low-income and far from a healthy food market source.

Nevertheless, about 11,000 of the total 33,000 residents in these food desert neighborhoods (about one-third) are low-income individuals located more than mile from a grocery. These individuals define the neighborhoods that form the first type of food desert tracts, and they directly experience the barriers to obtaining healthy foods that arise from the combination of scarce income and distance from the source. The fact that about 8,500 of them (approximately 79%) are vulnerable children (under age 18) or seniors (age 65 and over) adds to the challenge. Various physical or mental disabilities also raise barriers for a good number of these residents by impairing abilities to carry out daily living chores that are taken-for-granted by most of us.

The second type of food desert continues to focus on low-income census tracts, but turns attention to lack of access to transportation in households. The USDA also changes the distance criterion for this second type of food desert. Recall that a distance of more than one mile was used to define “living far” from a grocery in the first type discussed above.

Pathways to Progress

The USDA defines the second type as a low-income census tract that includes 100 or more households located a half-mile or more from a grocery and having no access to a vehicle. Five San Angelo census tracts represent this type of food desert. The neighborhoods in Angelo Heights, Paulann, Fort Concho-East, and Belaire depict both types of food deserts. The city's Reagan area joins the list of the second type of food desert tracts. (Neighborhoods depicting both types are highlighted yellow on the map above).

Altogether, there are about 700 households located more than a half-mile from a healthy grocery source and lacking access to a vehicle in the San Angelo food deserts of the second type. This includes about seven percent of all households in the five neighborhoods. Their members face numerous barriers to maintaining a healthy diet that arise from the combination of low household income, lack of transportation, and distance from a well-stocked grocery. As in the first type of food desert, the presence of vulnerable children and elder occupants complicates the challenges in these households.

One of San Angelo's leading non-profits working in the food deserts has a unique activity once a year when they invite a wide variety of leaders from all parts of the community to ride along with their volunteers as they deliver meals to elderly citizens. What strikes me is how many participants in the Meals for the Elderly "Big Wheels" event seem to leave the experience making comments suggesting it opened their eyes to a depth of poverty and hunger they never knew existed in San Angelo.

A lot more of that kind of awareness is necessary for the community to address seriously the food deserts. We need that awareness every day in order to reach beyond praising the saints giving food charity to ask why not every individual has access to healthy meals.

Asking Helder Camara's question does not diminish the magnificence and generosity of San Angelo's donors of treasure and time to support impactful programs like Kids Eat-FREE, Meals for the Elderly, Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, Grace and Grub, Rust street Ministries, or the Regional Food Bank. Raising the question does beg that we do more, however.

Doing more to ensure that every person has access to healthy food might start by supporting and promoting the Texas Hunger Initiative effort to use resources already established but underutilized. Examples of local resources that disparage and stigmatize as often as they encourage or promote include the national SNAP (food stamp) and WIC programs.

Doing more also entails developing new projects and resources. There are budding community and neighborhood garden projects awaiting the care and attention needed for expansion through local neighborhoods. A more vibrant farmer's market with operations extended through the year would be an asset. We could explore community supported farming and more farm-to-school programs. With encouragement and support, we could establish service-learning programs to address the food deserts and to engage secondary and university level students in 4-H and other related extracurricular clubs, such as those studying culinary arts and food sciences curricula. Students could gain both career-related knowledge and a sense of responsibility to the community.

An added number of people in San Angelo and the surrounding region are more aware of possibilities like these thanks to the West Texas Hunger Summit last week.

Pathways to Progress

Anne Frank was someone who knew dire poverty and desperate hunger. Her lesson for us, “Hunger is not a problem. It is an obscenity.” “How wonderful it is,” she wrote in her Diary, “that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

[Table of Contents](#)

Seeing a Pattern Here

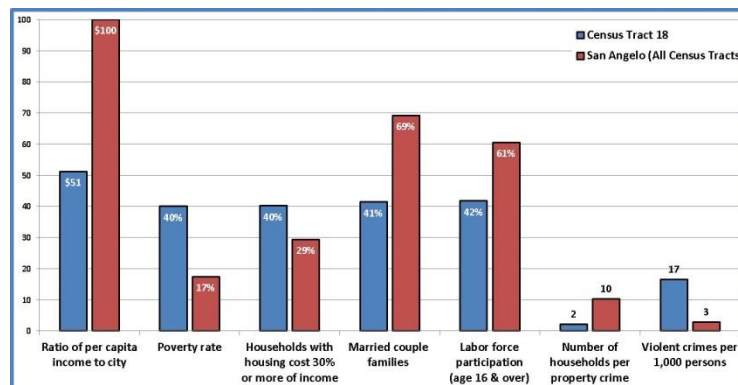
Kenneth L. Stewart

June 5, 2014

In the popular book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam claimed, “Over the course of the last generation or two, a variety of technological, economic and social changes have rendered obsolete the stuff of American social capital.” Mindful that communities need more than money to solve their most challenging problems, Putnam lamented a growing disconnect of Americans from family, friends, neighbors, and civic structures. He urged that social capital, the very fabric of our connectedness to each other, needs new weaving for communities to progress and for citizens to lead satisfying lives together.

Results from the fourth straight year of tracking key indicators in ASU’s Neighborhood Development Index give cause to heed Putnam’s message. For the fourth straight time, the quality of life in census tract 18 encompassing the Blackshear and Downtown neighborhoods lags the rest of the city, with few signs of closing the gaps.

Figure 80: Key Indicators in the San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index



ASU’s Community Development Initiatives updates the Neighborhood Development Index annually. Based on 2012 data, the most recent information from the US Census Bureau, the latest update includes 19 indicators of neighborhood characteristics across San Angelo’s 20 census tracts. Statistics detailing factors such as income levels, family composition, and criminal activity reveal stark differences between the Blackshear-Downtown neighborhoods and the rest of the city.

For instance, it is a fact that households experience increasing degrees of financial risk and instability as housing costs rise above 30 percent of the total household income. In census tract 18, about 40 percent of households experienced housing costs of 30 percent or more in 2012. Across the city, by comparison, only 29 percent carried that level of cost burden.

The per capita income of \$11,606 in the Blackshear-Downtown neighborhoods was approximately half (51%) of the citywide per capita income (\$22,684) in 2012. In line with that, difference was a 40 percent rate of poverty in census tract 18. The city’s overall poverty rate was

Pathways to Progress

17 percent. The rate of labor force participation (based on residents age 16 and over) was 42 percent in Blackshear-Downtown. This compares to a citywide rate of 61 percent for 2012.

Married couples headed only 41 percent of families in census tract 18 during 2012 compared to 69 percent citywide. Rates for both criminal violence and property crime are at least five times higher in the Blackshear-Downtown neighborhoods than the city overall.

These gaps are shocking illustrations of what Putnam was saying when he wrote, “Americans are right that the bonds of our communities have withered, and we are right to fear that this transformation has very real costs.” Those “real costs” can come in the form of whole sections of the community hopelessly mired in household instability, lack of employment, poverty, and crime.

Putnam, however, believes that projects to rekindle neighborhood and civic engagement can change the inner workings of local communities, as well as their outward appearance. Leaders from Atlanta to Indianapolis to Omaha and San Antonio need no convincing because they have seen neighborhoods transformed. Some of San Angelo’s leaders are moving to build citizen engagement and social capital too.

During April, the City’s Development Services division launched a new Development Task Force as an on-going opportunity for greater dialogue about improvements to City processes like zoning, infrastructure development, building regulation, and code enforcement. This start, however, was just an initial step toward opening new pathways for expanded citizen engagement in the development of the community and its neighborhoods.

Also under consideration are ideas about a Lunch and Learn Series to provide citizens a forum to learn about City services, City assets such as GIS Mapping capabilities, and receive briefings from key City staff. Another idea is to field a series of Citizen 101 evening workshops for hands-on learning experience on such topics of emergency management, methods of fighting neighborhood blight and decay, or the basics of neighborhood and community organizing.

City of San Angelo (CoSA) University is a concept that could turn into a premier opportunity for citizens to train for civic leadership in the community and its neighborhoods. Such a leadership development framework could operate evenings, at least once a month, over a nine-month period. CoSA U would select students from the full spectrum of city neighborhoods. With tutelage from City management and members of the City Council, CoSA U students could become well versed in the community’s vision and develop a deep understanding of the vital roles for engaged citizens. They could learn the full story on key issues like water, waste management, roads and highways, or safety measures. Students could develop a rich understanding of how to use the range of community assets for progressive projects. CoSA U graduates could readily serve on key City advisory boards or commissions, or take part in big actions and projects that will make a better San Angelo.

Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* is certainly among the most widely read books in the world about the ways Americans govern themselves. Writing in the 1830s, Tocqueville originated the concept of “American exceptionalism” as a way of expressing his opinion that America was “qualitatively different from all other countries.” While he never used the term

Pathways to Progress

social capital, he did claim "it was the Americans' propensity for civic association that most impressed him as the key to their unprecedented ability to make democracy work."

An exceptional community must not accept the notion that residents in neighborhoods like Blackshear and Downtown will persistently endure households that are more unstable, higher unemployment, greater poverty, and higher crime levels than the rest of us. Help the leaders working to energize new civic associations to form the foundation of a community moving forward together.

[Table of Contents](#)

Many Struggle to Keep a Roof over Their Heads

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

March 5, 2015

Comedian W.C. Fields once quipped, “The cost of living has gone up another dollar a quart.” Some think he was talking about a quart of milk, something associated with groceries as an important cost of living indicator. Others remember the comedian talking about a quart of spirits, a commodity associated with the cost of entertainment.

Analysts include items like housing, transportation, utilities, health care, and groceries to develop the cost of living index. To set up an index, they typically fix the U.S. average cost of items to 100. They score particular areas on whether local costs are higher or lower than the US average. A local cost of living below 100 means things are cheaper than average for the country. If an area is more expensive, its cost of living is over 100.

The current overall cost of living for Texas is 90. In addition, the state is lower than the U.S. average on each category of items. The score for San Angelo of 83 is even lower than the State, and current data indicates local residents pay only about 60 percent of the national average for housing.

On the other hand, the local cost of utilities is higher with a score of 109. This means many local residents enjoy price advantages to acquire housing, but the cost to heat or cool a typical residence exceeds the state and national averages.

The realization that San Angelo’s vaunted low cost of living does not mean price advantages apply to all categories of essentials or to all neighborhoods prompted us to conduct more in-depth analysis. We especially wanted to assess whether the low cost of living means housing is more affordable for all homeowners and renters in the local community.

A key factor for homeowners is whether families have sufficient income to bear the costs of acquiring and keeping a house. Median family income has been rising nicely in San Angelo recently. According to Census Bureau estimates, it increased by 6.4 percent from 2010 through 2013.

Another key factor is price. Between 2010 and 2013, Census Bureau housing value estimates showed the median value for America’s owner-occupied housing decreased by 2.7 percent. However, this trend did not hold for the Lone Star State. The estimates indicate a rise in San Angelo of 15.3 percent between 2010 and 2013. The gain across Texas was 3.4 percent.

Of course, income or price alone does not determine affordability. Instead, affordability fluctuates according to the relationship between the factors. That is why the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University gives annual calculations for housing affordability in the metropolitan areas of Texas. Their particular computation tabs the relationship between an area’s median family income and the amount required to get a loan on a median priced house.

Pathways to Progress

The 2014 affordability number from the Real Estate Center pegs the median income in San Angelo at 1.93 times the required amount. Most importantly, the number represents a 25 percent decline in housing affordability since 2010.

Given that homeownership in San Angelo is becoming less affordable overall, we wondered how the current trend affects owners and renters in the various neighborhoods of the city. To investigate, we adjusted the Real Estate Center's method to create similar affordability indicators based on available data for the city's 20 residential census tracts.

To determine affordable levels of housing cost in neighborhoods, we employed a standard used by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The standard homeowner says costs are entirely affordable if the total to pay a home loan, taxes, and regular monthly bills is no more than 30 percent of household income.

Our neighborhood indicators compare the median income of families who have existing home loans to their median housing costs. The tabulation for a neighborhood is larger than one if housing costs are less than 30 percent of median family income. The score is smaller than one if the costs exceed 30 percent of the median income.

Similarly, the indicator for renters is greater than one if the median gross rent (the rental amount plus regular bills) is less than 30 percent of the median household income of area renters. The score is less than one if gross rent exceeds 30 percent of the renters' median income.

The neighborhood results indicate homeowner affordability improved from 2010 to 2013 in 11 of the 20 census tracts of the city. Angelo Heights led the way with a 33 percent improvement in the relationship between the median income of families with home loans and the amount needed to have affordable housing costs. Each of the 11 areas with improved affordability had costs in 2013 below 30% of the median family income of area homeowners.

On the other hand, affordability diminished in eight areas for the period. Vista del Arroyo topped the areas with declining affordability, while Fort Concho, Bentwood-Nasworthy, Paulann, Southland, and Bonham each dropped more modestly.

Changes in affordability for renters are more challenging across the city. To begin, it is important to know that rental affordability is not a side issue affecting only a small number of citizens. On the contrary, renting a home is on a growth trajectory. The Census estimate for 2013 indicates renters occupied 40 percent of San Angelo's nearly 38,000 occupied housing units and the number was up by four percent from 2010. This means, of course, that home ownership is on a corresponding downward path.

Figure 81: Homeowner Affordability in San Angelo Neighborhoods

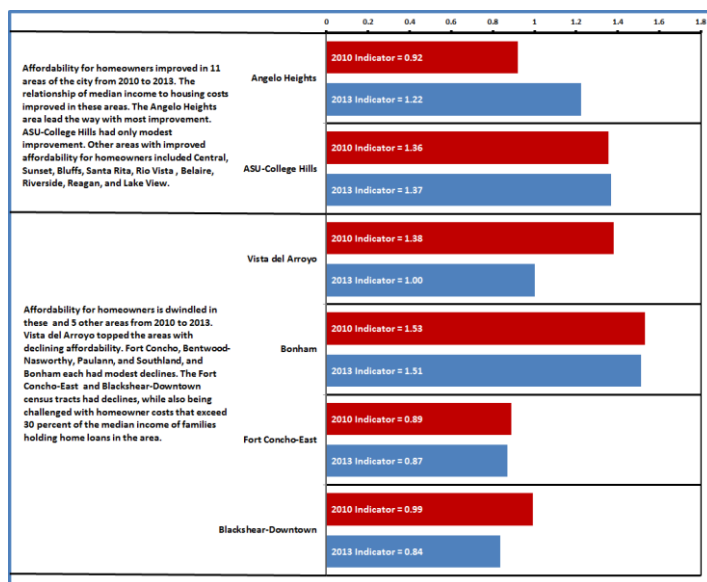
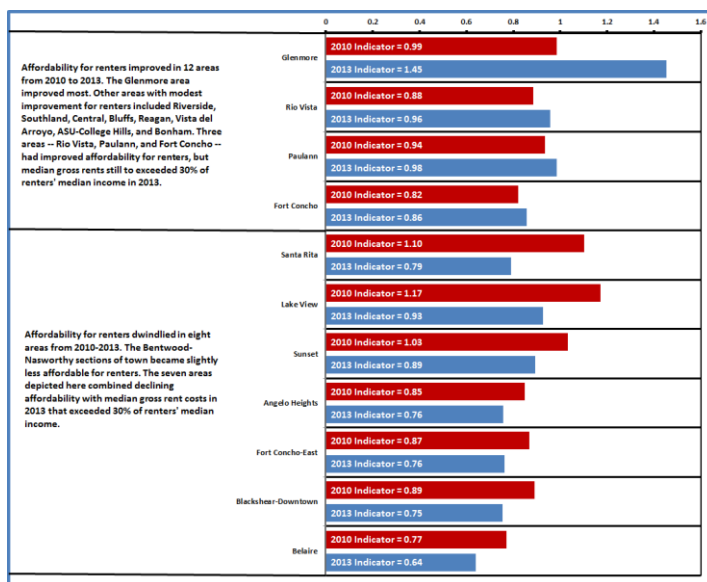


Figure 82: Rental Affordability in San Angelo Neighborhoods



Our tabulations between median renter income and gross rent costs in the various neighborhoods show that renting became more affordable from 2010 to 2013 in the majority (12) of the city's census tracts. The Glenmore area leads the way with a 47 percent improvement.

Still, the fact renters in 2013 were beyond affordable cost levels in half of the 20 census tracts of the city made renting more difficult than homeownership. Three areas -- Rio Vista, Paulann, and Fort Concho -- saw slight improvements in renter affordability since 2010, but gross rents continued to exceed 30% of the renters' median income in 2013.

Pathways to Progress

Median gross rents also exceeded affordability based on the median income of renters in seven other parts of the city. In contrast, median costs for homeowners exceeded median family income in only two census tracts in 2013, the Fort Concho-East and Blackshear-Downtown areas.

W.C. Fields might say a quart of rent went up too much in parts of the city. The trouble with his focus, however, is that it draws attention to only one side of the cost of living equation.

Indeed, thinking about the cost of living on essentials like housing frequently becomes preoccupied with price issues and too often degenerates into hostile divisions over the merits of subsidizing costs to reach “affordability” for some community members. Just look at the angry, ugly, painfully stereotyped town hall meeting that occurred recently over the prospect of an affordable housing development being located in a prosperous section of our own city.

The alternative is to give at least equal, if not more, attention to the income half of the equation affecting affordability. It is a good thing, for instance, that Walmart recently announced the company will raise starting pay to \$9 per hour and increase wages for many of its existing workers.

It is curious, on the other hand, that the announcement generated a flurry of attention in the nation’s business news. Josh Bivens, a wage and labor analyst at the Economic Policy Institute observed, “Wages rising should be the norm . . . and should happen all the time without fanfare. The fact that an announcement that some workers in one company might get a raise is treated as a newsworthy blockbuster shows just how far we have to go before we have an economy . . . working for most Americans.”

Massachusetts Institute of Technology conducts ongoing research to develop regular estimates of living wages reflecting the income needed for a minimum standard of living across the country. Their current living wage estimate for a family of four is \$18.70 in Texas and \$17.89 in San Angelo.

As a community, we should have open debate about what wages a family needs to meet essential needs. We could then strive to continue the current trend toward rising incomes to reach such levels. That is preferable to a community divided by shameful efforts to encourage city government to adopt decisions favoring segregation of affordable housing to already “low income” concentrated sections of the community.

[Table of Contents](#)

Figures Behind Tax Burden

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart
November 5, 2015

It was during the weeks leading up to a congressional deadline for deciding whether a set of tax laws should be extended past their scheduled expiration date in 2010. The tax provisions in question were highly favorable to the wealthiest Americans and originally passed in 2003 during the Bush Presidency.

It was then that business magnate and billionaire investor Warren Buffett raised eyebrows among his fellow privileged Americans with a candid admission. “If anything,” Buffett said in an ABC News interview, “taxes for the lower and middle class and maybe even the upper middle class should even probably be cut further. But, I think that people at the high end - people like myself - should be paying a lot more in taxes. We have it better than we've ever had it.”

Of course, regular outcries from business leaders warning of dire consequences from just thinking about raising taxes on businesses and the wealthy refute Buffett. However, Warren Buffett is also not the only American raising doubts about the equity of the tax system.

Indeed, a March 2015 national survey by the Pew Research Center found that the top complaint that Americans have about the tax system is the belief that some corporations and wealthy people do not pay their fair share of taxes. State and local tax levies often escape careful scrutiny in debates over tax fairness because the most heated issues usually focus on federal corporate and personal income taxes.

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, a non-partisan research group committed to providing accurate and timely information, estimates that the average American pays about 28 percent of their income for taxes. This overall tax burden for the average American is part federal taxes (18%), and part state and local taxes (10%).

However, the fairness of state and local taxes varies from place-to-place because states and locales have diverse tax systems. Fortunately, the Institute on Taxation tracks the differences in its yearly report, *Who Pays: A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States*.

The 2015 report assesses the fairness of state and local tax systems by measuring the share of income different groups will pay in 2015. The key finding is that nearly every state and local tax system is fundamentally unfair because so many of them rely heavily on consumption (sales and excise) taxes to raise revenue. It pegs Texas as the third most unfair tax state in the nation.

The problem with relying on a consumption tax like the sales tax is that it fundamentally takes a much greater share of the income of low- and middle-income individuals and families than from the wealthy. Ironically, as the 2015 report on *Who Pays* points out, states like Texas feature themselves as low tax states, but in reality, they are high tax states for middle-income, and especially for low-income, people because of the heavy reliance on sales tax.

Building from the Institute on Taxation findings, we decided to develop a method to estimate how the sales tax affects neighborhoods across San Angelo. To begin, we retrieved data on the

Pathways to Progress

sales tax revenue used to fund the state government, the City of San Angelo, and Tom Green County during 2013.

Figure 83: 2013 Revenue and Budget Estimates

2013 Revenue Estimate	Budgeted Sales Tax Revenue	Households	Average Sales Tax	Total Budgeted Tax Revenue	Percent Reliance on Sales Tax
State of Texas	\$25,943,807,086	8,886,471	\$2,919	\$50,992,561,539	51%
Tom Green County	\$7,700,000	\$42,286	\$182	\$35,036,625	22%
City of San Angelo	\$15,128,366	\$35,973	\$421	\$47,530,703	32%

We found that the state budgeted nearly \$26 billion of sales tax collections for its operations, while the city planned on a little over \$15 million and the county called for \$7.7 million. The sales tax made up 22 percent of the total budgeted tax revenue in the county plan and 32 percent in the city's budget. The state relied on the sales tax for 51 percent of its overall tax collections.

Our next step was to divide the budgeted sales tax revenues by the number of households obligated to pay. Statewide, for instance, there were 8,886,471 households in 2013 to pay the planned \$25,943,807,086 in sales tax collections for state government operations. By dividing the budgeted sales tax amount by the number of households, we determined that the State of Texas planned to collect an average of \$2,919 per household in 2013.

Using the same method, we discovered the City of San Angelo counted on \$421 per household and Tom Green County relied on \$182 per household. Altogether, the state and the two local governments counted on collecting \$3,522 per household in San Angelo.

Our final task in assessing the sales tax effect was to determine the sales tax burden on different households in the city and its neighborhoods. We accomplished this by applying the findings from state and local budgets to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey estimates of average household income.

For instance, the Census Bureau estimated that the average household income in San Angelo for 2013 was \$58,237. By taking the previous finding that governments planned to raise \$3,522 per household in sales tax, we can see that the average after-tax household income would be \$54,715. This computes to a sales tax burden of six percent on San Angelo households to fund local and state government operations.

Figure 84: Estimate of Household Revenue by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Census Tract	2013 Average Household Income	Average After-Sales Tax Household Income	Sales Tax Burden
Blackshear-Downtown	18	\$26,833	\$23,311	13.1%
Fort Concho	9	\$33,974	\$30,452	10.4%
Fort Concho-East	7	\$36,415	\$32,893	9.7%
Rio Vista	14	\$40,573	\$37,051	8.7%
Angelo Heights	12	\$42,941	\$39,419	8.2%
Belaire	8.02	\$44,053	\$40,531	8.0%
Reagan	4	\$44,738	\$41,215	7.9%
Vista del Arroyo	13.04	\$48,354	\$44,832	7.3%
Lake View	2	\$48,844	\$45,322	7.2%
ASU-College Hills	13.01	\$50,095	\$46,573	7.0%
Paulann	3	\$51,408	\$47,885	6.9%
Central	11.02	\$55,055	\$51,532	6.4%
Riverside	1	\$55,646	\$52,124	6.3%
San Angelo City	All Tracts	\$58,237	\$54,715	6.0%
Sunset	13.03	\$58,317	\$54,795	6.0%
Glenmore	8.01	\$67,503	\$63,981	5.2%
Southland	17.06	\$68,720	\$65,198	5.1%
The Bluffs	11.01	\$68,999	\$65,477	5.1%
Santa Rita	10	\$71,347	\$67,825	4.9%
Bonham	17.07	\$76,369	\$72,846	4.6%
Bentwood-Nasworthy	17.08	\$124,919	\$121,397	2.8%

Source Notes: The average household income data are from the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009-2013 combined samples. The average after-sales tax household income applied budgeted sales tax revenues from the Texas Comptroller's Office, Tom Green County Treasurer, and City of San Angelo Budget Office to determine that tax collections of \$3,522 per household.

Applying the same calculations to Census Bureau data on average household income in the various neighborhoods of the city reveals the simple mathematical truth about the problem of unfair consumption taxes identified by the Institute on Taxation.

In 2013, 13 of the city's 20 census tract neighborhoods had higher sales tax burdens than the six percent liability for households in the city overall. Mirroring the Institute on Taxation findings, the local results show that the sales tax burden takes the greatest share of income (13.1%) from the city's lowest income neighborhood (the Blackshear and Downtown census tract) where the average household income was \$26,833 in 2013.

Even in middle-income neighborhoods like ASU-College Hills or Paulann, many households and families shouldered sales tax burdens around seven percent. The burden in the city's higher income areas dropped to less than five percent in Santa Rita and Bonham; less than 3 percent in the Bentwood and Nasworthy census tract.

Recent political news has signaled the beginning of a wild "silly season" in America's national political life. We will hear plenty of absurd claims in the next 12 months about how low- and

Pathways to Progress

middle-income Americans pay little to nothing in taxes, saddling wealthy business people and companies with almost all the responsibility for funding essential functions of government.

In San Angelo, we have an opportunity to follow Warren Buffett's lead toward clear-headed recognition of the excess burdens we place on those in the middle and at the bottom when it comes to funding state and local government service. Honest and sincere appreciation of the actual contributions of ordinary people, even of the poorest among us, can go a long way toward opening many pathways to progress in the local community.

[Table of Contents](#)

Solving Social Security

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

May 12, 2016

The Social Security Act, a key reform of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, sought to provide social insurance and public assistance for Americans. While its public assistance programs provided cash relief, the social insurance program provided benefits, including disability insurance, survivor, and old-age benefits.

According to the Social Security Administration (SSA), more than 42 million Americans age 65 and over, plus another 17 million under age 65, received benefits under one of these programs in 2014. This amounts to nine of every 10 seniors and 18.5 percent of the total US population.

Old-Age Insurance is the core social security program because it insures against one of the most prevalent hazards experienced by nearly every American worker and family; the loss of an income with rising age and retirement. The average benefit to retired workers in the closing month of December 2014 was \$1,329 according to SSA records. Additional benefits paid in that last month of 2014 included Survivors Insurance to dependents (widowers and children) of deceased workers, and Disability Insurance for disabled workers and their families.

Overall, 59 million beneficiaries of social security programs received an average payment of \$1,215 in December of 2014. Nearly 4 million were Texans averaging \$1,172 in benefits, and among the Texans were 21,310 Tom Green County residents who received an average check of \$1,135. The monthly total of benefits paid in December 2014 was more than \$71 billion.

That amount exceeding \$71 billion in monthly benefits paid out by the government is what makes social security a focal point of politicians, policymakers, and citizens concerned about the national debt today. They see a growing number of retiring, longer-living baby boomers combining with a shrinking number of younger working people to the pay taxes supporting the program. Indeed, according to the Social Security 2015 Trust Report, the existing funds and projected tax collections for social security will be able to pay full benefits only until the year 2034.

Given the immense significance of the social security issue, we wanted to explore its bearing on San Angelo and the Concho Valley. First, we were curious to see how the ratio of workers to seniors is changing in local communities compared to the state and the nation as a whole. Then, we wanted to estimate the impact on the financial security of families in our local communities.

We followed a three-step process to achieve the first task. We started by computing average annual employment rates within the working-age population (ages 16-64) over a time period corresponding to the nation's recovery from the economic recession in 2008.

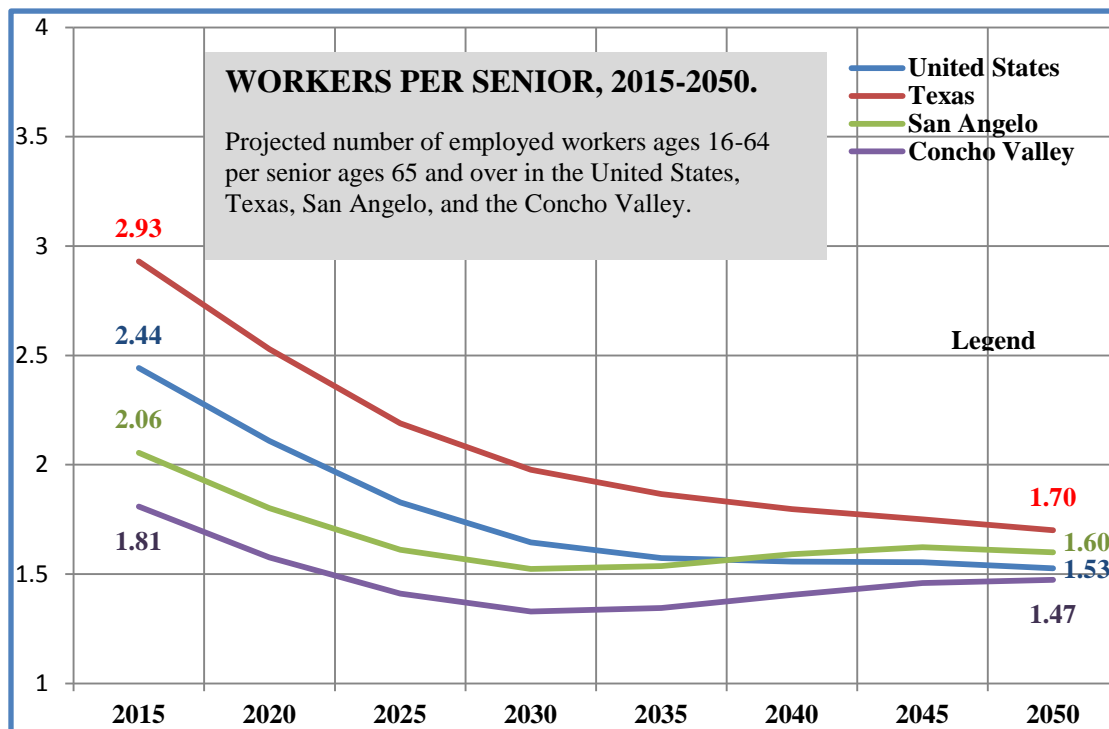
Using the Census Bureau's American Community Survey Data from 2009-2014, we calculated an average employment rate of 54 percent among individuals aged 16-64 in San Angelo over the six years. The six-year average employment rates for the Concho Valley, Texas, and the nation were 53, 58, and 56 percent respectively.

Pathways to Progress

In the next step, we applied these six-year average employment rates to the estimated size of the working age population to estimate the number of employed workers age 16-64 in 2015 and for years going forward. The final step simply divided the estimated number of workers by the number of people age 65 and over, which derives the ratio of workers to seniors for 2015 and the years ahead.

Our projection anticipates that San Angelo's ratio will decline from 2.06 to 1.6 employed workers per senior between 2015 and 2050, which is a decline of 22 percent.

Figure 85: Projected Number of Employed Workers



The interesting thing about anticipated changes in the number of workers per senior member of the population is that, over time, Texas and the nation are becoming more like San Angelo and the Concho Valley. Our local communities currently have fewer workers per senior. However, Texas and the nation have more rapid declines that will fall more in line with the local numbers in the future.

We again turned to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to assess the impact of social security on families. Data for 2014 showing the breakdown of families receiving social security benefits and various direct-cash forms of federal assistance are particularly interesting.

Figure 86: Distribution of Social Benefits

Assistance	San Angelo			Concho Valley		
	Number	Percent	Poverty Rate	Number	Percent	Poverty Rate
Federal Cash Only*	826	3.6	41.0	1383	3.5	33.6
Social Security**	6312	27.9	6.8	11459	29.3	6.7
None	15505	68.5	14.4	26250	67.1	13.3
Total Families	22643	100.0	13.2	39092	100.0	12.1

*These families received direct cash assistance from Supplemental Security Income (SSI: to assist needy aged, blind, or disabled persons) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF: to assist families in poverty). Payments for medical care providers and non-cash assistance such as food stamps (SNAP) are not included.

**These families received social security pensions, survivor benefits, and permanent disability insurance payments. Those receiving railroad retirement benefits are also included in this count.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

These data show just how vital social security benefits are for the financial stability of families in San Angelo and the Concho Valley. For instance, 68.5 percent of 22,643 families living in San Angelo did not receive social security benefits or any other form of federal cash assistance. The poverty rate among these families was 14.4 percent.

Comparatively, there were 6,312 families receiving social security benefits, and their rate of poverty was 6.8 percent. Moreover, 826 families receiving only cash assistance for the needy had a poverty rate of 41 percent.

Communities across the Concho Valley demonstrated a similar pattern. Families receiving social security were least likely to be in poverty. Those with neither social security nor any other federal assistance were more than twice as likely to fall into poverty, and those receiving only federal public assistance were most likely to be living in poverty.

Since its beginning, social security has been a foundation for retirement security, and still today, it appears to be one of the best tools for preventing families from slipping into poverty. Strikingly, for many years, policymakers and citizens alike have allowed this crucial mechanism for insuring financial security to become more-and-more vulnerable to the demographic trend.

To us, some of the most surprising current attitudes toward social security are manifest in the complacent acceptance of young Americans who seem resigned to paying social security taxes while never seeing a benefit. In the end, it is not that hard to figure out what is necessary to fix Social Security programs. We could raise or remove the tax ceiling, extend the retirement age, means test some benefits, or a combination of such measures.

These are hard choices, to be sure, but given the essential role of social security in laying a floor of financial security in every local community, young Americans should loudly demand a solution. Their older parents and grandparents should join in, not only to secure their own futures, but for the sake of their children too.

Pathways to Progress

Solving social security is more than a matter of honoring the hard work of seniors by insuring their retirement. Solving it is an issue that demands solution for the benefit of the young, the old, and every other member of every local community across America.

[Table of Contents](#)

Grading our Schools

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

November 3, 2016

Pathways in October highlighted the different kind of segregation occurring in San Angelo and other West Texas cities. The article connected some dots between unfolding demographic trends, increase income inequality, and concentration of minority students into predominantly low-income neighborhood elementary schools. It also applauded the substantive efforts in San Angelo Independent School District (SAISD) to work toward integration of students across income levels.

We ended the last article by urging local and state policy makers to make the long-term commitment necessary to prioritize public school funding needed to keep the promise of high quality, effective education for all children in Texas. We had it in mind at the time to take a deeper look into some of the details about what such a long-term commitment could mean.

Coincidentally, an Economic Policy Institute (EPI) report released in August underlines the imperative for school districts everywhere in the country to recruit and retain high-quality educators. The report stresses that schools find this a difficult goal to realize due to high turnover rates, annual retirements, and a decline in students choosing teaching as a career.

Reinforcing the EPI report, a March, 2016 article in *neaToday* reports on a recent national survey of college freshmen revealing that the number of students wanting to major in education reached the lowest point in 45 years.

Similarly, Washington Post reporter Valerie Strauss analyzed the US Department of Education Teacher Shortage Area list in August 2015. She found a disturbing trend toward growing shortages in key subject areas over the years. Digging deeper, Strauss reveals evidence of a rapidly diminishing satisfaction among teachers due to low pay, insufficient classroom resources, arduous testing requirements, and rigid teaching guidelines.

We turned to data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to see what these troubling trends might mean for staffing patterns in the 17 elementary schools serving San Angelo. Surely, SAISD shares the imperative identified in the EPI report to recruit and retain high-quality educators in all local schools. However, there is probably no more important resource than a high-quality teaching staff for those elementary schools serving low-income areas of the city with high concentrations of minority students.

We obtained data covering five school years beginning with 2010-2011 on faculty pay levels, teaching experience, and student to teacher ratios to analyze the staffing patterns of the SAISD neighborhood schools. To assess the data, we devised grading system based on a 100-point scale.

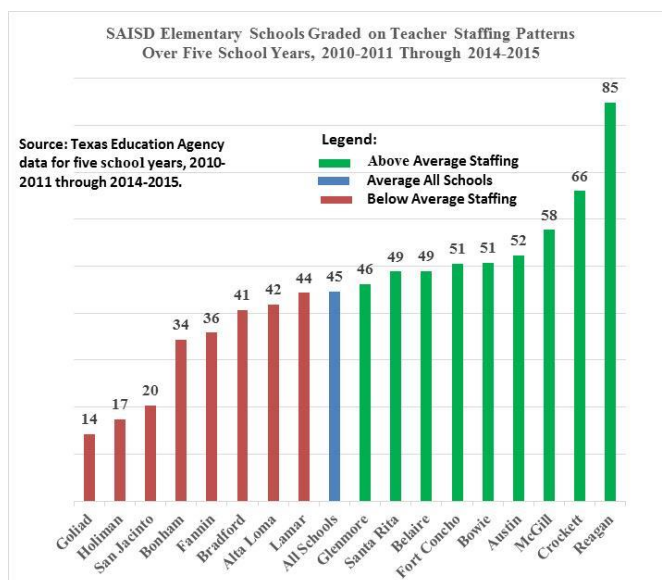
The school with the highest average salary for teachers received a score of 100 and the one with the lowest average received a zero. Other schools received a grade reflecting where they fell on the 100-point scale between the ones with the highest and lowest average salaries.

Pathways to Progress

The process used the same method to assess the schools based on teaching experience, the percentages of tenured as well as beginning faculty, and the student to teacher ratio. We computed final scores to give better grades to schools with higher average salaries, low student to teacher ratios, and a more experienced and tenured faculty combined with a number of beginning teachers.

The results of the analysis provide positive evidence that SAISD takes important substantive steps in efforts to ensure high quality schools across the district. One indication of this is the observation that five years of data shows the majority of schools (9 of 17) have teacher staffing patterns that are better than the average for the district.

Figure 87: SAISD Elementary School Grades



A more important demonstration of the District's positive steps, however, is the observation that Reagan Elementary has the highest grade when comparing its staffing patterns to the other elementary schools in the system. The highest paid and most experienced teachers worked at this school over the five school years from 2010-2011 and 2014-2015. It also had the lowest student to teacher ratio.

The Reagan neighborhood served by this school is one of the lowest income areas of the city. Median household income is \$31,521, about 30 percent lower than the city overall. Moreover, about 86 percent of the school's students for the 2014-2015 school year were economically disadvantaged, and about 89 percent were Hispanic, African American, or other minority students. Austin, Belaire, and Fort Concho are examples of other elementary schools serving low-income areas of the city that have strong staffing patterns.

On the other hand, results also show significant challenges for the district to support high-quality staffing in all schools serving high percentages of students from low-income households. Children living in East San Angelo, for instance, live in households with a median income of only \$29,706.

Pathways to Progress

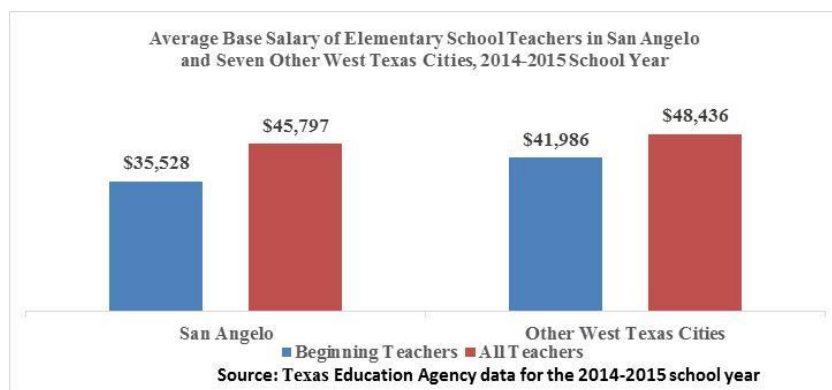
Most of these children attend San Jacinto school with some going to Holiman elementary. Both of these schools had below average staffing patterns over the five school years covered by the data. Meanwhile, economically disadvantaged students made up 86 percent of the student body at San Jacinto school in the 2014-2015 school year, and about 88 percent were minority students.

The contrast of the staffing in the schools serving the Reagan and East San Angelo neighborhoods is stark. Both are low-income areas, and the neighborhood schools are similarly populated with economically disadvantaged and minority students. However, the staffing at Reagan School provides a model for SAISD to follow as leaders work to improve schools with below average staffing patterns serving low-income areas. The list of these schools is too long. It includes Alta Loma, Bradford, Fannin, San Jacinto, Holiman, and Goliad schools.

Another significant challenge for SAISD surfaces by comparing data on faculty pay for elementary schools serving the other cities of West Texas including Abilene, Amarillo, El Paso, Lubbock, Midland, Odessa, and Wichita Falls. SAISD elementary teachers, on average, had lower base salaries than the elementary teachers did in six of these seven West Texas cities during the 2014-2015 school year. Only Wichita Falls had a lower average.

The average base salary for teachers at the 17 SAISD elementary schools in 2014-2015 was \$45,797. The average in schools serving the other West Texas cities was \$48,436. The difference is 5.4 percent. In addition, the differences between cities are largest for the least experienced elementary teachers.

Figure 88: Average Base Salary of School Teachers in Selected West Texas Cities



Beginning teachers in SAISD elementary schools had an average base pay of \$35,528 for the 2014-2015 school year. The average for the seven other cities was 15.4 percent higher at \$41,986. See the chart below for a visual comparison of San Angelo and West Texas average base salaries.

Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education in the Obama administration, said something so often repeated by local and national policy makers. The way Duncan put it, “To encourage more top-caliber students to choose teaching, teachers should be paid a lot more.”

Most people realize that teachers do not go into this work to get rich. Nevertheless, we should not penalize teachers for choosing the profession. Clearly, serious efforts to address the

Pathways to Progress

educational needs of today's public school students will take a sustained commitment to raising teacher pay, and much more.

How many times, over how many years, will teachers hear leaders and policy makers repeat the mantra that they "should be paid a lot more," only to see a faint follow through?

[Table of Contents](#)

INEQUALITY IN THE CONCHO VALLEY

Inequality Imperils Us (*April 10, 2013*): A comparison of real estate data shows that the median home value in San Angelo's most exclusive neighborhood continued to move ahead of the rest of the city between 2009 and 2011. Even in a troubled economic time, inequality in the value of housing -- the primary wealth possession for most families -- continued to distance San Angelo's privileged residential areas from the rest.

Pay Roles (*July 4, 2013*): Social services and healthcare support occupations are examples of majority female local jobs while men are the majority in areas like management, law enforcement, and construction or extraction work. Most importantly, the average annual median earnings for workers in the female majority job clusters (\$25,691) are 82 percent of the median for majority male occupational groups (\$31,367).

Blaming the Poor for Being Poor (*August 7, 2014*): Today in Tom Green County, about 18,000 residents (16.2% of the population) live on incomes below the federal poverty level. About 7,000 (6.8% of the population) live in "severe poverty" with incomes below half of the poverty level. Interestingly, their demographic characteristics do not match well with images of the poor resulting from the long public debate over the culture of poverty.

Income Inequality by the Numbers (*September 4, 2014*): The goal of the Great Society was to improve the lives and livelihoods of minorities and the poor through actions that would close the gaps between household and families. Yet, 50 years later, there is still much we need to accomplish. The US remains one of the most unequal of the developed nations. Texas remains one the most unequal of the states. San Angelo, however, may be moving in a very positive direction, at least at the level of the Metro Area. Nevertheless, some are not part of the equation and are falling further behind.

Drifting Apart? (*May 7, 2015*): According to the Census Bureau's five-year combined American Community Survey data sets, the majority of both high-income and extremely poor families in San Angelo became increasingly residentially separate and insulated from the rest of the city's residents over the years from 2006 to 2013. While extremely poor families became more residentially separate, the pattern in these environs was not as strong as in the high-income neighborhoods.

Waking Up From the American Dream (*July 2, 2015*): In Harvard's Equality of Opportunity Project, Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren asked, "To what extent are children's opportunities for upward economic mobility shaped by the neighborhoods in which they grow up?" The results of their project shows that Tom Green County is below the average of counties in the study at helping poor children climb the income ladder. Sixty-four percent of the 50 most populated counties in Texas also do better.

A Great Revolt? (*February 4, 2016*): According to Census Bureau estimates, nearly four of every ten San Angelo households lived on less than \$35,000 in 2014. Moreover, the number of cost-burdened households in this group increased from 61.4 percent in 2010 to 66.6 percent in 2014. That computes to an eight percent increase in housing insecurity over the 2010 level.

Pathways to Progress

Different Kind of Segregation Occurring (October 6, 2016): San Angelo is a city demonstrating moderate segregation in elementary schools. San Angelo's 48 percent of minority students attending low-income schools is well below the statewide mark. It combines with 23 percent of non-Hispanic whites attending the same schools, which is slightly above the statewide number.

[Table of Contents](#)

Inequality Imperils Us

*Kenneth L. Stewart, Laurence F. Jones, and Susan McLane
April 10, 2013*

Jordan Weissmann's article, "Yes, U.S. Wealth Inequality Is Terrible by Global Standards," in The Atlantic Online last month is just one of many recent entries in a larger debate over inequality of wealth and income in America.

A YouTube video on the topic that went viral about four months ago is stirring much of the recent activity in popular media. The larger debate, however, has been ongoing since scholars began noticing a national trend toward increasing income and wealth inequality more than a decade ago. Now, the latest edition of the San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index produced by ASU's Community Development Initiatives shows that the local community is not an exception to the national trend.

More than 88,000 residents occupy about 36,000 households dotting the landscape of San Angelo. The homeowner occupies 62 percent of these households. One or more children live in 32 percent, and 26 percent have at least one senior resident who is age 65 or over.

The households of San Angelo fan out in all directions from the city's downtown area to form neighborhoods where residents live in contrasting environs with distinct brands of housing, as well as people of different means, talents, and capacities.

ASU's Community Development Initiatives (CDI) created the San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index some three years ago to help bring the contrasting qualities of San Angelo neighborhoods into focus. The latest version of the index includes 28 indicators based on 2011 data (the latest year available covering all the indicators) to compare the city's 20 census tract neighborhoods. It includes demographic factors, items describing living environments, housing features, and the income and education characteristics of residents in different parts of the city.

The index uses a 0 to 100 point scale to indicate how a particular neighborhood is doing compared to other neighborhoods in the city. Higher ratings indicate that a neighborhood has a higher quality of life for residents than other areas of San Angelo.

Not surprisingly, the neighborhood scores from the index identify Bentwood County Club and the residential areas surrounding Lake Nasworthy (census tract 17.08) as the most developed neighborhood in San Angelo. Indeed, the Bentwood-Nasworthy section in the southwest part of town has scored as the city's best-developed area for each of the three years that CDI has produced the San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index. The challenging aspect of the results over that time is that a gap is widening between the Bentwood-Nasworthy area and the rest of the neighborhoods in the city.

One way to see the widening gap is to compare the top-rated 100-point score for Bentwood-Nasworthy to the city's overall index score that combines all the neighborhoods of the community. For the latest results, based on 2011 data, 68 points on the 100-point scale separate Bentwood-Nasworthy from the overall citywide score of 32. A year earlier in 2010, the citywide score was 45, thus separating Bentwood –Nasworthy from the rest of the city by only 55 points.

Pathways to Progress

Only 43 points separated the City's score of 57 from Bentwood-Nasworthy's top-100-point rating based on 2009 data.

Direct comparisons of some specific results from the 28 indicators that make up the San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index provide concrete examples of the widening gap. The Comparison Table below details some specific factors that illustrate how the Bentwood-Nasworthy area has been separating from the rest of the city over recent years.

Figure 89: San Angelo Neighborhood Development Index Comparisons

Comparison Table	2009			2011		
	Bentwood-Nasworthy (Tract 17.08)	All Neighborhoods Citywide	Gap (Percent Difference)	Bentwood-Nasworthy (Tract 17.08)	All Neighborhoods Citywide	Gap (Percent Difference)
Neighborhood Median Home Value Compared to Citywide Median Home Value	\$216,200	\$81,300	165.9%	\$240,500	\$89,300	169.3%
Neighborhood Per Capita Income Compared to Citywide Per Capita Income	\$40,894	\$20,970	95.0%	\$48,313	\$22,249	117.1%

One comparison shows that, even in a challenging real estate market, the value of homes in Bentwood-Nasworthy continued to move ahead of the rest of the city between 2009 and 2011. The estimated \$216,200 median home value for Bentwood-Nasworthy in 2009 was 165.9 percent higher than the citywide median value of \$81,300.

Two years later in 2011, this difference had widened to a 169.3 percent higher median home value in Bentwood-Nasworthy. Even in a troubled economic time, inequality in the value of housing -- the primary wealth possession for most families -- continued to distance the city's privileged residential areas from the rest.

Inequality of income widened even more. In 2009, for instance, the level of income available to residents of Bentwood-Nasworthy stood at \$40,894 per capita. This was 95 percent more than the \$20,970 per resident citywide.

This means that for every \$100 that households across the city had available in 2009 to support a family member, households in Bentwood-Nasworthy on average had \$195 to do the same. By 2011, moreover, the per capita income gap amplified to 117.1 percent.

Comparisons such as these about growing wealth and income inequalities sometimes cause citizens to become leery and cynical. Perhaps they see it as "class warfare;" maybe a veiled attempt to encourage some type of massive government transfer process; or as a sinister attempt to incite envy or spite toward the more well-off members of the community.

This type of unpleasant defensiveness about the topic is unwarranted in these times. In fact, there are serious reasons why leaders and citizens not only should, but also must, be understand the extent and direction of inequality in their communities. Among these is the well-established knowledge that growing income and wealth disparities aggravate differences in the living experience of people on opposite ends of the spectrum, including their encounters related to health, education, and future economic opportunities.

Pathways to Progress

Even more important from a community leadership viewpoint is that a political solution to social and economic problems becomes less viable as inequality grows. The key dynamic in this effect is that the problems of the poor and less educated do not affect local community leaders as much when their life experiences become more insulated in privileged bubbles that produce barriers to empathy, compassion, and responsiveness across the boundaries of neighborhoods and social status.

Interestingly, one of the most iconic conservative intellectuals of the nation recently came to emphasize the urgency of exactly this effect of rising inequality in America's communities. Reagan-era conservatives heralded Charles Murray's books like *Losing Ground* and *The Bell Curve* during the 1980s and 1990s as they prodded for reform of the welfare state. They canonized Murray's work as proof that the welfare system assembled during the 1960s had created a massive welfare-dependent underclass by undermining incentives to personal responsibility and self-improvement.

Now, by contrast, Murray's new work, *Coming Apart*, asserts that the nation's gravest current threat is not the partisan gap that consumes the television news, but rather the emergence of new upper class that is becoming increasingly alienated from other citizens in America's cities and towns.

It is not a dire problem, according to Murray, if a truck driver does not understand the priorities of a law professor, a news anchor, or a government official. It is a serious problem, though, if the ignorance is the other way around, because the elites and leaders are busily affecting the lives of everyone else. We hope that San Angelo is still a ways from the grip of that kind of ignorance, which is more reason why everyone should be knowledgeable of the trends that can take us there.

[Table of Contents](#)

Pay Roles

Kenneth L. Stewart, Laurence F. Jones, and Susan McLane
July 4, 2013

To launch a second term in office, President Eisenhower advised Congress in his 1956 State of the Union address “the principle of equal pay for equal work without discrimination because of sex is a matter of simple justice.”

Is it a matter of justice? There is no doubt! Is it simple? It is not so much! Nonetheless, there are certain facts about women, work, and earnings that are basic and indisputable.

One basic fact is that women going to work accounts for the lion’s share of the expansion of the US labor force over the last half century. In 1956 when Ike counseled “simple justice,” the civilian labor force included more than 66 million workers. About 45 million were men over 15 years old who participated in the labor force at a rate of 85.5 percent. Women’s labor force participation stood at just 36.9 percent. They numbered 21.5 million in the 1956 workforce.

Over the next 56 years, however, the ranks of women workers grew by more than 51 million compared to only 37 million additional men. The female participation rate reached 57.7 percent in 2012. Male participation fell from its 85.5 percent level in 1956 to 70.2 percent in 2012. Although it is not recognized often enough, the labor of women deserves a major share of credit for economic growth, increased productivity, and improved living standards in America over the past half century.

San Angelo followed this trend as well. In 2011, more than 22,000 women over age 15 took a part in the local workforce yielding a female participation rate of 58.3 percent. The force participation rate for men that year was 62.5 percent. More than ever before, women today make an indispensable contribution to the economy at both the local and national levels.

Another basic fact is that women are essential income providers in families and households. In San Angelo, for instance, the latest census information shows that both husband and wife work in half of the city’s married-couple families, and when kids are in the home, that number increases to 58 percent.

Likewise, 65 percent of the city’s children live in households with all parents in the workforce (some with two parents; some with only one). These local patterns coincide with the recent, widely publicized, Pew Research Center estimate that mothers are either the sole or the primary breadwinners in 40 percent of all US households with children. This includes single working moms and moms who earn more than their spouses do.

It may seem reasonable to think that the nation has largely resolved gender pay equity issues given the immense importance that women occupy in the workforce and as family breadwinners at this time in our history. On this matter, however, the issues remain intense and the facts are complex.

The most widely known single fact about women’s paychecks is that the national annual median for full-time female workers (\$37,886 in 2011) equals only 77 percent of the annual median

Pathways to Progress

earnings for males (\$49,200 in 2011). That percentage has been a relatively stable number for a decade, and it is the source of outcries from pay equity advocates that women earn only 77 cents per dollar of male earnings. The number makes a good sound bite, but its over simplification provides little useful insight into key factors on pay disparities between women and men.

To begin, there are state and local variations in labor markets that the 77 cents on the dollar mantra simply glosses over. Among full-time, year-round workers In Texas for example, the annual median earnings of women (\$35,301 in 2011) amounts to 82 percent of the median for men (\$43,160 in 2011).

The same holds for San Angelo where the annual median for full time, year-round female workers was \$30,402 in 2011, equal to 82 percent of the \$37,157 median for males. The dollar value of earnings for full-time workers in San Angelo is lower than the state or nation, but the level of gender pay equity is equal to the state and better than the nation as a whole.

Part-time work is another key factor that has major impacts on pay differences. In San Angelo, for instance, only 30 percent of working males over age 15 are part-time. This compares to 51 percent part-timers among working females. Consequently, when part-time workers are added into the city's pay equity calculation, the median earnings of women (\$13,257) falls to just 52 percent of the male median (\$25,597). That is dramatically lower than the 82 percent level we just noted for local full-time, year-round working men and working women.

The particular job that workers go into also produces a significant effect. To illustrate, we examined 23 broad occupational clusters that employed about 96 percent of all local workers in 2011. We found that women are the majority of employees in 11 of the 24 groups.

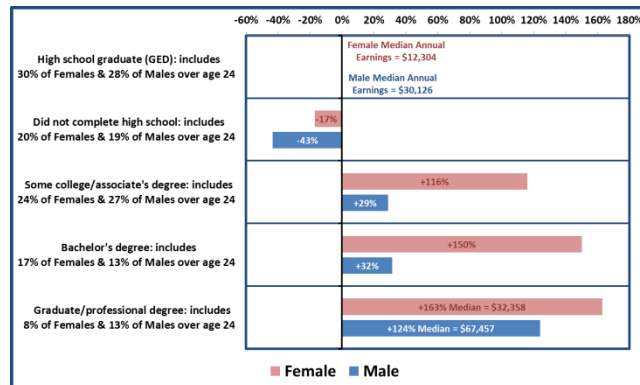
Social services and healthcare support occupations are examples of majority female local jobs while men are the majority in areas like management, law enforcement, and construction or extraction work. Most importantly, the results reveal that the average annual median earnings for workers in the female majority job clusters (\$25,691) are 82 percent of the median for majority male occupational groups (\$31,367).

For women and their families or loved ones, the best single action to take toward flattening gender-based pay disparities is to pursue education aggressively – especially beyond high school graduation.

Everyone by now has heard the sage advice that education beyond high school is essential for success in the labor force. What many do not know is that each level of achievement past high school adds larger premiums to woman's paychecks than to man's paycheck.

Specifically, working women over age 24 in San Angelo who have completed at least some college or a 2-year associate's degree have median earnings that are 116 percent more than the \$12,304 median for women with only a high school degree. The gain in median earnings over high school graduates reaches 163 percent for women in the local economy who achieve a graduate or professional degree. Even though the dollar value of men's median earnings is higher at every level, the percentage of pay increase that each new level of education yields for women is larger than for men.

Figure 90: Median Annual Earnings by Gender and Education



To every young woman, the clear message is stay in school beyond high school to learn everything you can. The message for family members and others who love them is to encourage, help, and support the education they need.

In a well-known scholarly article, “The Paradox of Women's Poverty,” Joan Smith highlighted the subtle forms of discrimination that lingered around these patterns as far back as 1984. It is very likely that the same subtle discrimination contributes to the manifold of reasons for lower pay levels in majority female occupations and to the greater frequency of part-time work among some women. That is why gender pay equity issues remain intense.

At the very least, employers are obliged to respect the contributions of women to the workforce, productivity, and economic growth by heeding Donna Summer's musical refrain, also from the 1980s: "She works hard for the money; So you better treat her right."

[Table of Contents](#)

Blaming the Poor for Being Poor

Kenneth L. Stewart

August 7, 2014

Daniel Patrick Moynihan touched off a fiery public debate in 1965. It remains very much with us today.

First appointed by President Kennedy as Assistant Secretary of Labor, Moynihan became a key architect of President Johnson's sweeping War on Poverty policy. He was later became an esteemed Senator representing New York between 1977 and 2001.

Moynihan's policy research, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," set off the controversy. This research, popularly known as the "Moynihan Report," argued: "the Negro family in the urban ghettos is crumbling. So long as this situation persists," said Moynihan, "the cycle of poverty and disadvantage will continue to repeat itself."

Moynihan never referred to the "culture of poverty" in the original policy research. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis developed the notion in 1959 while studying poor families of Mexico. Soon, some believed that Moynihan's work advanced a "culture of poverty" explanation about America's inner city poverty involving mostly Black and Hispanic Americans. Supporters and opponents of Johnson's War on Poverty circled wagons.

Opponents of the policy, mostly political conservatives, used the culture of poverty thesis to attribute the persistent cycle of poverty to the characteristics of the poor themselves, and eventually to the welfare state fostered by government policy. By the 1970s, the War on Poverty came under criticism for not reducing generational poverty (a term economists apply to persistent poverty) because programs failed to change the values, attitudes, and behaviors leading the poor to their own folly. By the 1980s and 1990s, conservatives based political campaigns and careers on the idea that War on Poverty programs created generational poverty by rewarding the poor for irresponsible behavior and welfare dependency.

Supporters of the policy, usually political liberals, were critical of the way conservatives used the culture of poverty thesis to "blame the victim" as they focused on another aspect of the original Moynihan Report to explain persistent poverty. The original had traced the origins of family and social problems experienced by the poor to larger historical and structural forces in society. In the case of Black families, Moynihan specifically cited the history of slavery and the structure of discrimination erected by Jim Crow legislation as forces giving rise to the crumbling families and other social problems. Liberals later added many other structural factors such as the gutting of viable economies in city centers, the disappearance of low-level jobs with living wages, and systemic social and economic discrimination against the poor.

By the end of the 1990s, the American public routinely divided policy makers and fellow citizens into one of two competing camps. Those who believe the poor are poor because they lack personal responsibility and a work ethic; and those who think budget-cutting politicians, globalizing economic markets, social stigma, and discrimination victimize the poor.

Pathways to Progress

Today in Tom Green County, about 18,000 residents (16.2% of the population) live on incomes below the federal poverty level. About 7,000 (6.8% of the population) live in “severe poverty” with incomes below half of the poverty level. Interestingly, their demographic characteristics do not match well with images of the poor resulting from the long public debate over the culture of poverty. The table below shows the demography of poverty in Tom Green County based on the 2012 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 91: The Demography of Poverty in Tom Green County

The Demography of Poverty in Tom Green County	Population	Poverty Rate	Percent of Poor
Population	113,281	16.20%	100.00%
Seniors (age 65 & over)	16,736	8.90%	8.50%
Black	5,500	21.10%	5.30%
Hispanic	41,575	22.50%	52.20%
Children (under age 18)	25,554	22.20%	32.50%
Female	57,121	18.00%	57.10%

African-Americans, for example, do not comprise a substantial segment of the poverty population. It is true that local Blacks experience a higher rate of poverty than the general population by a margin of 21.1 to 16.2 percent. Nevertheless, Blacks make up only 5.3 percent of the poor in Tom Green County.

Hispanics have a rate of poverty (22.5%) very similar to African Americans (21.1%). Because they are a much larger segment of the total population, however, Hispanics comprise 52.2 percent of the local poor. Females are the only other demographic group forming a majority of the poverty population. Fifty-seven percent of the poor in Tom Green County are female.

Surprises also appear in the age characteristics of the poor. The rate of poverty among seniors, for instance, is substantially lower (8.9%) than the general population (16.2%) and only 8.5 percent of the overall poverty population is age 65 and over. Children under age 18, on the other hand, have a 22.2 percent rate of poverty and comprise about one-third of the total number of local poor.

Behavior traits of the poor also defy stereotypes descending from the long debate. Take the well-worn conservative notion that the culture of poverty encourages welfare dependency for example. It has been nearly two decades since we enacted sweeping welfare reforms in 1996 largely to address this issue. Amazingly, however, this stereotype survives when only 3.9 percent of the local poor are receiving direct assistance for needy families (TANF) or other kinds of government assistance according to 2012 Census Bureau data.

The work environment is more challenging for those in poverty. In 2012, 44 percent of the local poor aged 16 and over participated in the labor force and 65 percent of these labor participants had gainful employment. Each of these numbers is about 20 points lower than the corresponding rates of labor force participation and employment for the overall working age population.

Pathways to Progress

Conservatives often read lower labor force participation and employment rates among the poor as indicators of unwillingness to work. The facts about the local working poverty population, however, deny using a broad brush to stereotype the poor as lazy. Truth is some individuals at all levels of income are unwilling to work.

Figure 92: The Behavior of the Local Poor

Facts about the behavior of the local poor	Rate of Behavior
Receiving government assistance of any kind	3.90%
Participating in the labor force	44.10%
Employed (if in the labor force)	65.40%
Unmarried (Divorced, Separated, Never Married)	53.30%
Females Unmarried	53.80%
Unmarried females with children	34.00%
Children with no parent in the labor force	41.00%
Children living with mother not in the labor force	48.80%

Children living in poverty face issues that are more serious for the future. With 22 percent of local kids living under the poverty line, many face daily problems connected to inadequate nutrition, domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, and a host of obstacles to the most modest levels of opportunity and success. Census data from 2012 indicate that as many as four of every ten poor kids live in families without a parent engaged in the labor force.

Circumstances like these describe the situation of approximately 2,000 children in Tom Green County. Together they comprise about 12 percent of the overall population in poverty. They are the ones most likely to experience persistent or generational poverty in the years ahead.

The previous Pathways to Progress column in the July 3 edition of the Standard Times emphasized the demographic transformation of the local community into a majority Hispanic population. The article emphasized the necessity of closing long established historical gaps in education, skills, occupations, and earnings between the current minority populations and the non-Hispanic white majority.

Today's writing is about one of the deeply entrenched difficulties in stepping forward toward finally closing the gaps. For nearly fifty years, Americans have competed in a blame-game, sometimes with derision, but always pointing crossways at the causes of poverty.

Some have had no patience for efforts to address poverty by changing established social and economic institutions, wanting only for change in the hearts and minds of poor people. Others have wanted nothing more than to overturn the rules of established economic and social practices to make room for the poor.

In "Culture of Poverty Makes a Comeback," Patricia Cohen gives a popular newspaper account of some of the recent research showing the futility of sticking to our sides in the long debate triggered by the Moynihan Report. More and more, current research is revealing how effective change in the attitudes and behavior of the poor requires corresponding adjustments to support access and success of the poor in schools and jobs. Likewise, workable changes in access

Pathways to Progress

demands conversion of attitudes and behavior. Communities making progress at closing the gaps address both sides of the coin.

Now is the time for creating new solutions in our community; new solutions supporting access and opportunity, and change in hearts and minds.

[Table of Contents](#)

Income Inequality by the Numbers

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

September 4, 2014

Speaking on a cold January day in 1961, John F. Kennedy, during his inauguration as President of the United States, made a pledge to the “people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery.” Our country’s new president pledged, “Our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right.” “If a free society cannot help the many who are poor,” he implored, “it cannot save the few who are rich.”

Three years later, exactly six months after the fateful Kennedy assassination, the new President Lyndon B. Johnson offered the commencement address at the University of Michigan on May 22, 1964. Johnson advised the graduates, “The challenge of the next half-century is whether we have the wisdom to use [our] wealth to enrich and elevate our national life and to advance the quality of our American civilization.” “Your imagination and your initiative and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs,” he urged, “For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society” which “demands an end to poverty and racial injustice.”

Congress subsequently launched legislation between 1964 and 1968 laying foundations for programs to support health care and food for the most vulnerable Americans, money to enhance community arts, and higher education initiatives that opened college to millions of ordinary people beyond the wealthy or elite classes. Millions today continue to rise because of Great Society initiatives.

Unfortunately, too few of today’s beneficiaries seem to realize how its accomplishments are reflected in their own. Historian Gerald R. Gill revealed a key reason why in 1980 when he created a stir by showing that much of the public – incited by neo-conservative members of Congress and some sympathetic intellectuals -- had grown sour toward the Great Society. In his book, *The Meanness Mania: the Changing Mood*, Gill argued that hostility toward efforts to reduce economic and social inequities had supplanted compassion. The result was fuel for a still-raging ideological conflict over how to contend with matters such as income inequality.

Available evidence indicates that the San Angelo Metropolitan Area, encompassing Tom Green and Irion Counties, progressed quite well over the years between 2006 and 2012 compared to 24 other Texas Metro centers. A quick look at two inflation-adjusted 5-year average household median income figures begins the story.

The Census Bureau’s American Community Survey data estimates an inflation-adjusted median household income for 2006-2010 of \$41,489 in the San Angelo Metro Area. The same estimate for 2008-2012 is \$44,357 showing a healthy gain of 6.9 percent. Indeed, only four of the 25 Texas Metros (Odessa, El Paso, Corpus Christi, and Midland) saw stronger gains.

Pathways to Progress

It is a tricky thing that a rising median income does not always add up to more equality between households and families. It does not necessarily mean that income growth is “raising all boats” as the saying goes.

In fact, the median income will increase with only modest gains by households and families with earnings below the median. If those living above the median see exceptionally large increases at the same time, then income inequality will increase as the median moves up.

Analysts use a statistic called the Gini Coefficient to help avoid mistaking income growth for increasing equality. The Gini Coefficient produces a single decimal fraction on a scale ranging from zero to one. If we apply the Gini to household incomes, a score of zero would indicate perfect equality – the hypothetical situation where everyone has the same. A Coefficient of one, on the other hand, would mean that a single household has all the income while all others have nothing -- a state of perfect mathematical inequality. Since neither perfect mathematical equality or inequality virtually never occur in real life, our task is to interpret the insights gained from Gini results moving upward from zero toward one as they indicated increasing levels of inequality that actually exist at different times and places.

The Census Bureau reports the Gini Coefficient of 0.471 as a measure of inequality between household incomes in the US from 2008 to 2012. This compared to a Coefficient of 0.467 for earlier 2006-2010 period. This seemingly small increase of slightly less than one percent in the Gini Coefficient actually makes the US one of the most unequal countries of the world’s industrialized nations. The Gini Coefficients for Texas for 2006-2010 (0.472) and 2008-2012 (0.474) also show a slight increase in household income inequality leading to a rank as the seventh most unequal state in the country.

In this context, the San Angelo Metro Area looks like the sort of place the Great Society envisioned. Not only did its median household income increase nicely by 6.9 percent, as shown in the chart below, but its Gini values (0.446 for 2006-2010 and 0.443 for 2008-2012) show a small 0.6 percent reduction of inequality. The local metropolitan area encompassing Tom Green and Irion Counties managed to combine income growth with increased equality between households. However, a change in the picture occurs from narrowing the scope to the City of San Angelo and its constituent census tract neighborhoods.

Like the larger metro area, the city proper did experience a 6.7 percent increase in median household income from \$39,616 in 2006-2009 to \$42,263 in 2008-2012. However, the gains did not make it into all corners of the city. To be sure, 16 of the 20 census tract neighborhoods posted median household gains ranging from a small 0.4 percent (in the Sunset neighborhood area) to a hefty 18.9 percent (in the Central area neighborhood). Median household income fell in four neighborhoods ranging from -2.5 percent in the area around Glenmore School to -15.3 percent in the census tract encompassing Bentwood and Lake Nasworthy

Figure 93: Changes in Income Inequality in 25 Texas MSAs

Changes in Income Inequality in 25 Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas	2008-2012 Median Household Income	2006-2010 Median Household Income	Percent Change in Median Income	2008-2012 Gini Coefficient	2006-2010 Gini Coefficient	Percent Change in Gini Coefficient	Rank Based on Gini Change
Midland, Metro Area	\$59,391	\$54,945	8.1	0.488	0.503	-2.9	1
Odessa, Metro Area	\$50,851	\$45,815	11.0	0.461	0.473	-2.5	2
Wichita Falls, Metro Area	\$46,838	\$44,064	6.3	0.453	0.463	-2.2	3
Corpus Christi, Metro Area	\$47,108	\$43,534	8.2	0.463	0.467	-0.9	4
El Paso, Metro Area	\$39,699	\$36,333	9.3	0.467	0.470	-0.6	5
San Angelo, Metro Area	\$44,357	\$41,489	6.9	0.443	0.446	-0.6	6
Amarillo, Metro Area	\$47,866	\$46,384	3.2	0.452	0.455	-0.6	7
Tyler, Metro Area	\$47,312	\$46,139	2.5	0.478	0.479	-0.3	8
Laredo, Metro Area	\$38,421	\$36,684	4.7	0.460	0.460	0.1	9
Longview, Metro Area	\$45,565	\$44,276	2.9	0.456	0.455	0.1	10
Victoria, Metro Area	\$48,914	\$47,994	1.9	0.448	0.447	0.2	11
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, Metro Area	\$58,190	\$56,349	3.3	0.462	0.461	0.3	12
College Station-Bryan, Metro Area	\$38,599	\$38,426	0.5	0.518	0.516	0.3	13
San Antonio-New Braunfels, Metro Area	\$51,208	\$49,221	4.0	0.459	0.457	0.4	14
Brownsville-Harlingen, Metro Area	\$32,558	\$31,264	4.1	0.494	0.492	0.4	15
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, Metro Area	\$57,425	\$55,207	4.0	0.479	0.476	0.6	16
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Metro Area	\$33,218	\$31,879	4.2	0.495	0.491	0.8	17
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, Metro Area	\$59,646	\$57,561	3.6	0.461	0.457	0.9	18
Killeen-Temple-Fort Hood, Metro Area	\$49,990	\$48,228	3.7	0.422	0.418	1.0	19
Lubbock, Metro Area	\$43,800	\$42,415	3.3	0.486	0.480	1.2	20
Waco, Metro Area	\$41,589	\$40,612	2.3	0.470	0.464	1.2	21
Texarkana, Metro Area	\$42,346	\$42,550	-0.5	0.477	0.469	1.7	22
Beaumont-Port Arthur, Metro Area	\$45,955	\$45,029	2.1	0.465	0.454	2.4	23
Abilene, Metro Area	\$44,007	\$42,286	4.1	0.459	0.444	3.4	24
Sherman-Denison, Metro Area	\$46,587	\$46,875	-0.6	0.440	0.424	3.8	25

Figure 94: Changes in Income Inequality if San Angelo Neighborhoods

Changes in Income Inequality in 20 City of San Angelo Neighborhoods	2008-2012 Median Household Income	2006-2010 Median Household Income	Percent Change in Median Income	2008-2012 Gini Coefficient	2006-2010 Gini Coefficient	Percent Change in Gini Coefficient	Rank Based on Gini Change
Census Tract 18, Blackshear & Downtown	\$16,650	\$18,482	-9.9	0.419	0.470	-10.9	1
Census Tract 13.01, ASU-College Hills	\$37,820	\$40,013	-5.5	0.414	0.442	-6.3	2
Census Tract 11.02, Central	\$42,125	\$35,438	18.9	0.413	0.433	-4.6	3
Census Tract 13.04, Vista Del Arroyo	\$40,053	\$39,725	0.8	0.432	0.453	-4.6	4
Census Tract 13.03, Sunset	\$50,417	\$50,193	0.4	0.356	0.369	-3.6	5
Census Tract 17.06, Southland	\$70,859	\$65,115	8.8	0.370	0.384	-3.6	6
Census Tract 10, Santa Rita	\$59,706	\$53,409	11.8	0.432	0.446	-3.2	7
Census Tract 17.07, Bonham	\$71,117	\$66,111	7.6	0.390	0.400	-2.6	8
Census Tract 3, Paulann	\$45,709	\$43,651	4.7	0.391	0.400	-2.4	9
Census Tract 9, Fort Concho	\$27,372	\$25,429	7.6	0.395	0.398	-0.7	10
Census Tract 14, Rio Vista	\$29,447	\$28,214	4.4	0.398	0.399	-0.2	11
Census Tract 12, Angelo Heights	\$31,155	\$30,086	3.6	0.400	0.401	-0.1	12
City of San Angelo	\$42,263	\$39,616	6.7	0.448	0.447	0.2	
Census Tract 8.01, Glenmore	\$52,431	\$53,750	-2.5	0.376	0.375	0.3	13
Census Tract 8.02, Belaire	\$40,221	\$33,932	18.5	0.408	0.397	2.7	14
Census Tract 17.08, Bentwood & Nasworth	\$69,740	\$82,335	-15.3	0.491	0.472	4.0	15
Census Tract 7, Fort Concho - East	\$27,456	\$26,925	2.0	0.404	0.371	8.9	16
Census Tract 1, Riverside	\$42,862	\$41,625	3.0	0.374	0.335	11.7	17
Census Tract 2, Lake View	\$39,855	\$36,162	10.2	0.385	0.342	12.7	18
Census Tract 4, Reagan	\$30,625	\$28,663	6.8	0.409	0.358	14.3	19
Census Tract 11.01, Bluffs	\$51,250	\$48,429	5.8	0.442	0.386	14.4	20

Interestingly, two city neighborhoods experienced a combination of falling median incomes with increased equality between households. In the Blackshear and Downtown sections, for instance, median income declined by 9.9 percent from \$18,482 in 2006-2010 to just \$16,650 in 2008-2012. This coincided with a 10.9 percent reduction of the area's Gini Coefficient from 0.470 for 2006-2010 to 0.419 for 2008-2012.

Typically, falling median income combines with increased equality when low-income households and families become more and more concentrated and isolated into a geographical area. It should disturb all of us to know that appears to be the case for the Blackshear-Downtown sections of town. While the median income in Blackshear-Downtown tumbled from \$18,482 in 2006-2010 to \$16,650 in 2008-2012, the level of inequality between households in the area declined by 10.9 percent.

As the college student population slowly grows, the ASU-College Hills part of town also demonstrates a pattern falling median income with increased concentration of households with similar incomes. In that area, however, the concentration is occurring at substantially higher household income levels well above the poverty line.

The goal of the Great Society was to improve the lives and livelihoods of minorities and the poor through actions that would close the gaps between household and families. Yet, 50 years later,

Pathways to Progress

there is still much we need to accomplish. The US remains one of the most unequal of the developed nations. Texas remains one the most unequal of the states.

Now, in the midst of a booming economy, San Angelo may be moving in a very positive direction, at least at the level of the Metro Area. Nevertheless, some are not part of the equation and are falling further behind.

It was a time of economic abundance when President Johnson announced the Great Society initiative that spring of 1964. He knew, as Kennedy had known before him, that the best of times beckon especially for “our best efforts to help them help themselves.” This flourishing time for San Angelo also beckons for our best mindful efforts to step toward a better society on the way to a Great Society.

[Table of Contents](#)

Drifting Apart?

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

May 7, 2015

In his 2002 book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida famously introduced Americans to the importance of the “creative class” for developing local economies that lift the boats of rich and poor alike. This year, Florida teamed up with Charlotta Mellander at the University of Toronto’s Martin Prosperity Institute to conduct a major study of economic segregation in American cities.

The findings from Florida and Mellander show four major Texas metros – Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio – among the 10 most economically segregated cities of the nation. Interestingly, in his earlier “creative class” work, Florida found three of these cities – Austin, Dallas, and Houston – included in the nation’s 10 most creative urban centers.

Florida, with Mellander now uses Plato’s words to assert, “Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich.” Evidence of increasing economic segregation that they believe is resulting from choices by elites to create walls between themselves and the less affluent are particularly disturbing to these researchers.

Intrigued by the turnabout in Florida’s work on development of urban centers, we set out to apply the same methodology to investigate trends in San Angelo neighborhoods. Following the lead of Florida and Mellander, we used the Dissimilarity Index (DI) to measure degrees of income segregation in our local environs.

Interpretation of the DI is straightforward. The calculation always results in a value ranging between zero and one. Income segregated areas have high DI values. Thus, a city or neighborhood with a DI of 0.45 would mean that up to 45 percent of the people would have to move to other geographic locations to produce increased mixing based on income.

Our analysis started by identifying the number of extremely poor families living in each of San Angelo’s 20 census tract neighborhoods. We define extremely poor families as those with income totaling less than 50 percent than the designated federal poverty level. For example, \$23,850 is the current poverty level for a family of four, so people in families this size with income under \$11,925 (under 50% of the current level) are included in our analysis.

At the other end of the income spectrum, we identified high-income families as those with \$200,000 or more of income annually. This is the highest family income category tracked in the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. Any family in that income range would at least be near the \$232,000 threshold, which determined the nation’s top five percent of families in 2013.

The Census Bureau’s five-year combined American Community Survey estimated that an average of 1,130 extremely poor families resided in the city’s 20 census tract areas over the years from 2006-2010. A later repeat of same Census Bureau survey estimated the number increased by seven percent to 1,214 families over the 2009-2013 period.

Pathways to Progress

The same survey data indicates the number of high-income families increased more rapidly. The 2006-2010 Census surveys indicated a five-year average of 601 families with income of \$200,000 or more. This grew by 19 percent to 714 families for 2009-2013.

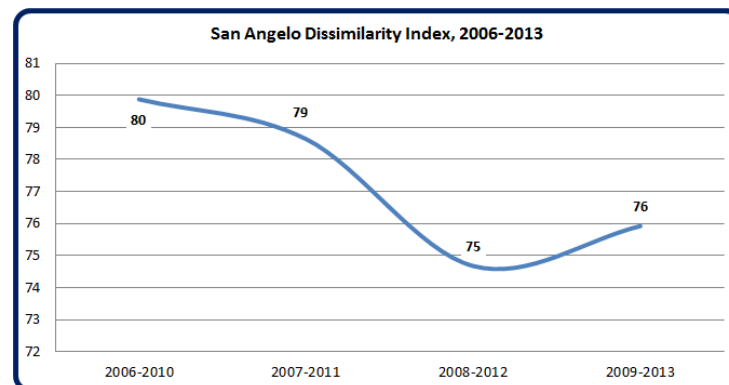
It is good news indeed that the ratio of privileged to impoverished families improved in San Angelo over the years from 2006 to 2013. These were years of economic struggle from the collapse of the nation's housing markets in 2008, followed by a local recovery spurred by new oil and gas explorations in the Cline Shale.

The point of our analysis, however, was not to determine simply whether the local economy is creating high-income family households at a quicker pace than impoverished ones. What we wanted to know is whether the process leads to mixing or separating the privileged and impoverished. Are we dividing, as Plato claimed all cities do, into two, "one the city of the poor, the other of the rich," or are we coming together as one community?

We applied the DI (Dissimilarity Index) method to the local community to gain insight into this question. The results seemed on the surface to point toward a trend that might shine a positive light on the local community.

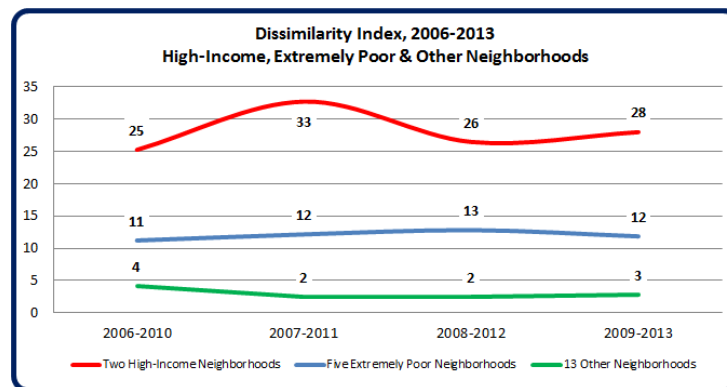
The citywide DI score of 80 for 2006-2010 fell four points to 76 in 2009-2013. This suggests about a five percent move toward more mixed income neighborhoods in San Angelo; a change toward declining segregation that would distinguish the city from the growing separation in most American metros revealed by Florida and Mellander.

Figure 95: San Angelo Dissimilarity Index, 2006-2013



By digging deeper into the dynamics of specific neighborhoods, however, we uncovered a more troubling pattern of both income integration and segregation going on within the city. To begin, we discovered that only a few census tracts in the city are home to the majority of high-income and extremely poor families.

Figure 96: Comparison of Dissimilarity Index



On the one hand, the majority of families with income of \$200,000 or more live in just two census tract areas. Tracts 10 and 17.08 encompass the Santa Rita, Lake Nasworthy and country club neighborhoods that were home to 57 percent San Angelo’s high-income families in 2009-2013.

Moreover, the average DI measure for these neighborhoods increased by 3 points (or 12%) from 25 to 28 between 2006-2010 and 2009-2013. Thus, the same Census Bureau data sets indicating more rapid increase of high-income families than the extremely poor also depict increasing income-based residential segregation in the neighborhoods where the majority of high-income families live.

The majority of extremely poor families, on the other hand, also live in only a few neighborhoods. In 2009-2013, an average of 63 percent of families with income under half of the designated poverty level lived in the census tracts encompassing the Angelo Heights, Belaire, Paulann, Reagan, and San Jacinto (or east San Angelo) neighborhoods.

These areas combined also displayed a slightly increasing pattern of income-based segregation with an average DI indicator of 11 for 2006-2010 moving up to 12 for 2009-2013. Extremely poor families, in other words, became more residentially separate over time, although the pattern in these environs was not as strong as in the high-income neighborhoods.

Nevertheless, the majority of both high-income and extremely poor families in our city became increasingly residentially separate and insulated from the rest of us over the years from 2006 to 2013 according to the Census Bureau’s five-year combined American Community Survey data sets. The citywide observation of increasingly integrated neighborhoods resulted from increased income-based mixing in the remaining 13 census tract areas of the city.

Like Florida and Mellander, San Angelo’s leaders and citizens should concern themselves with this evidence and evidence from other recent studies at ASU Community Development Initiatives that indicate increased inequality between the neighborhoods of the city.

Legitimate concern over increasing inequality need not be a consequence of envious notions that it is somehow unfair for some community members to have more than others have. Rather, the legitimate concern stems from endless evidence and age-old knowledge that segregation and

Pathways to Progress

isolation of one part from the rest weakens the indispensable role neighborhoods play in the progress of communities.

Income segregation of the sort revealed here, for instance, clearly affects the educational attainment of low-income children, and ensures more inequality for future generations. It dampens civic participation and blocks political consensus while stimulating polarization like shockwaves across a community.

Indeed, Plato's original concern that cities divide into two sprang from his wisdom that separation and faction renders the republic impossible. Ages later, our founders carried that wisdom forward as they sought to create unity from the many.

A half-century later, Charles Dickens lyrically told us; "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way."

How can we not know this folly?

[Table of Contents](#)

Waking Up From the American Dream

Laurence F. Jones and Kenneth L. Stewart

July 2, 2015

Fareed Zakaria is host of Global Public Square on CNN and a weekly columnist at the Washington Post. He recently advised, “Americans have so far put up with inequality because they felt they could change their status. They didn't mind others being rich, as long as they had a path to move up as well. The American Dream is all about social mobility in a sense - the idea that anyone can make it.”

Coincidentally, two Harvard economists recently released revealing results from a pivotal study about how community environments affect the pathways of people to move from bottom up, out of poverty. In Harvard's Equality of Opportunity Project, Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren asked, “To what extent are children's opportunities for upward economic mobility shaped by the neighborhoods in which they grow up?” To answer, they studied the characteristics of 2,478 counties across the nation along with data from tax records of more than five million families and children residing in them between 1996 and 2012.

The key finding of the study is that children's economic destiny in life is improved by measureable amounts for every year they spend growing up in a better-quality location. Of course, the study also found the inverse for children growing up in poorer areas. Chetty and Hendren call this the childhood exposure effect.

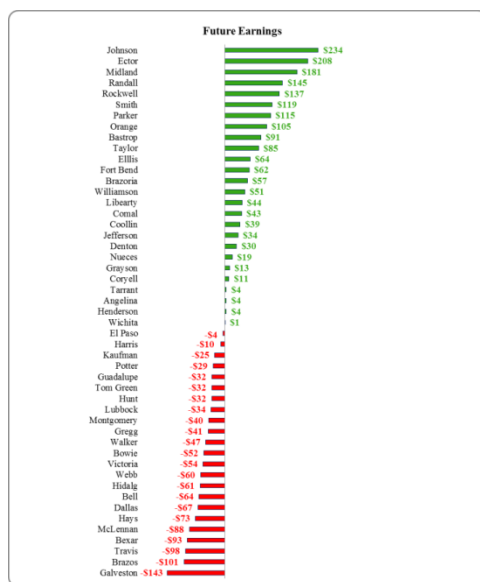
To measure the childhood exposure effect, the Equality of Opportunity Project first focused on children who moved into a county at different ages. The project then tracked the household income of children as they grew up to establish their own earnings as young adults at age 26.

Using earnings at age 26, the project calculated the average earnings of the young adults in all the study counties. It proceeded to derive the total effect associated with growing up in a community by taking the difference between the average of counties and the earnings of young adults from each specific county. The results indicated a positive childhood exposure effect of when a young adult's earnings were above the average for all counties. Earnings below the average of counties indicated a negative childhood exposure effect.

Since the project recorded the number of years the young adults had lived in specific counties, it was simple to convert the total childhood exposure effect into estimates of the annual increase or decrease of earnings associated with each year of childhood in a particular community. We used Chetty and Hendren's findings on the annual exposure effects to review the impact of growing up in poor families in each of the 50 most populated counties of Texas.

We found that 27 of the most populated counties in the state have positive annual childhood exposure effects on future earnings of poor children when compared to the average of counties in the Equality of Opportunity Project. For instance, every year a poor child spends in Johnson County adds about \$234 more to his or her earnings at age 26 compared to the average for poor kids in all the counties in the project.

Figure 97: Future Earnings by Populated Texas Counties



Over the course of a full childhood spanning 20 years, the difference adds up to \$4,680 more earnings at age 26 for poor children growing up in Johnson County. In contrast, children growing up impoverished in Galveston County see earnings \$143 below the average. Over 20 years of childhood, this amounts to \$2,850 less at age 26.

The Equality of Opportunity Project shows Tom Green County is below the average of counties in the study at helping poor children climb the income ladder. Specifically, each year of growing up poor in our county subtracts \$32 from earnings at age 26.

This result ranks the county 682nd out of the counties in Chetty and Hendren's study. This means that 72 percent (1,796) of the 2,478 counties in the project were better than Tom Green County at lifting kids out of poverty. Sixty-four percent of the 50 most populated counties in Texas also do better.

Nationwide, the Equality of Opportunity Project finds that higher levels of neighborhood integration by race and income enhance the prospects of poor kids to rise from poverty. So do better schools, fewer incidents of violent crime, and a higher proportion of two-parent families. The study also shows that the childhood exposure effect impacts boys more than girls.

We also find that these same factors correlate to social and economic development in many of our studies. For instance, when we recently pulled data from the Census Bureau on paychecks in Texas, we found the median earnings of workers with graduate or professional education degrees in Tom Green County are 3.7 times higher than workers who did not complete high school. By comparison, the median pay of graduate and professional degree workers averaged only 2.5 times more in the 27 counties with positive childhood exposure effects in the Equality of Opportunity Project.

We, like most people, think it is entirely fair and justified when workers are paid according to their level of education and qualifications, as well as the merits of the work they do. However,

Pathways to Progress

important as it is to recognize that some people deserve more pay than others, it completely misses the point of the findings reported here.

The point is that degrees of inequality can reach levels where the paths for more people to move up in the community have limitations. The Equality of Opportunity Project and our studies at ASU Community Development Initiatives show that more of this is happening than many local citizens want to admit.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous French observer of American social conditions in the mid-19th century, observed that many may sense inequality, but few have the moral conviction to seek the cure. Ironically, in the absence of that conviction, the fears highlighted by Zakaria may come true.

For too many in our local community, the American Dream could become just that – a bitterly disappointing dream. Some in the community, more than a few, need to summon the moral conviction to seek the cure.

[Table of Contents](#)

A Great Revolt?

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones
February 4, 2016

Can this weird season in our nation's politics last past the beginning of voting in the Iowa caucuses this week? David Frum, former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, produced a provocative cover story about the topic in the current issue of *The Atlantic* magazine. Frum claims the people saying, "That's my guy" to Donald Trump are spearheading a "Great Republican Revolt" that has "upended American politics in ways that may reverberate for a long time."

According to Frum, "the 'angriest and most pessimistic people in America' power the 'Great Republican Revolt.'" They are "the people we used to call Middle Americans" who, while watching more affluent citizens soar, get punished in bad economic times and do not see a fair share of the benefits in good economic times.

Frum's thesis is fascinating because it hits on unfolding patterns in our local community. We have touched on these repeatedly in Pathways over the past year. We illustrated increasing levels of income segregation and inequality between San Angelo neighborhoods in the past May and June issues, for instance, while taking note of the September release of data from the Federal Bureau of Economic Analysis showing San Angelo in second place on economic growth among the nation's metropolitan areas during 2014.

Like other communities across the nation, the benefits of the local economic boom are not reaching all parts of the community. Our most recent sign of this unpleasant condition comes from the newest version of the San Angelo Social Health Index.

ASU's Community Development Initiatives follows more than 100 statistics related to the local community each year. We compile the San Angelo Social Health Index using 21 of these indicators. The purpose is to track and assess changes in the community's quality of life over the years. We assign an annual score on a 100-point scale to the local quality of life each year. The scoring method balances two different factors. First, it weighs the contrast between the 21 local statistics to the same indicators for the state overall. Then, we factor in comparison of the current data to previous years.

Scores produced by this method are highest when the "social health" of the community is better than the scores of most other communities across Texas, and when the current quality of life is better than most prior years. Based on the most recently available statistics, San Angelo's average score for the first 15 years of the century is 52 points on the 100-point scale. The most recent score matches the average at 52.

The infant mortality rate, which was 71 percent lower in 2013 than in the year 2000, is one of the most positive trends affecting the quality of life in San Angelo. The decline in the crime rate from a high of 71 per 1,000 residents in 2003 to 41 per 1,000 in 2014 is another very positive result.

Pathways to Progress

The community sighed relief when the annual unemployment rate dropped from its 21st century high of 6.6 percent in 2010 to 4.0 percent in 2014. It is noteworthy, however, that the most recent monthly rate in November of 2015 crept back up to 4.3 percent. With the oil boom now in an edgy mode, the community has yet to return to its lowest 21st century annual rate of 3.7 percent during 2007.

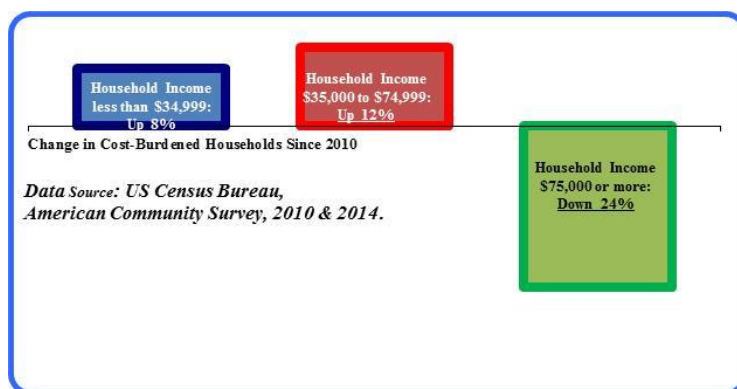
This kind of skittish economic performance is exactly what motivates the annoying feeling that life in this country used to be better for ordinary people that Frum believes is driving the “Great Republican Revolt.” After all, the drop in unemployment appears to have stalled just as economic growth reached record proportions as noted previously. The average personal income soared to record levels at the same time in 2014.

People hear about how the economy is performing well, but many feel it is not that good for themselves and other people they know. Information on the burden that housing demands from people’s income is perhaps the part of the San Angelo Social Health Index that best reveals what ordinary folks are more likely to experience.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers households cost-burdened if housing costs total 30 percent or more of the income generated by all household members. Coming out of the recession driven by a collapse of housing markets in 2008, 33.1 percent of San Angelo households remained cost-burdened in 2010. As the economy boomed, that rate reduced only slightly to 31.2 percent by 2014. Behind the general statistics, households and families had very different experiences based on income levels.

The top quarter of households had incomes exceeding \$75,000 in 2014. Only 1.6 percent of these were cost-burdened, but that rate was down from 2.1 percent in 2010. Only a small quantity of prosperous families experience cost-burdens by the HUD definition. However, there was a substantial proportionate decline in their numbers between 2010 and 2014; the difference calculates to a 24 percent reduction from the 2010 level.

Figure 98: Change in Cost-Burdened Households Since 2010



The story is more ominous for households with fewer income resources. To begin, it should not be a source of pride to a community to know that nearly four of every ten households lived on less than \$35,000 in 2014 according to Census Bureau estimates. It is downright shocking that the number of cost-burdened households in this group increased from 61.4 percent in 2010 to

Pathways to Progress

66.6 percent in 2014. That computes to an eight percent increase in housing insecurity over the 2010 level.

Of course, Frum focuses on those in the middle to find the fuel for the “Great Republican Revolt.” In San Angelo, these are households with incomes ranging from \$35,000 to \$74,999. The range is vast, but the number in the group is not. Consistent with Frum’s thesis that the middle is dwindling, a little over a third of local households in 2014 were in this range.

The most important thing about the dwindling middle, however, is their recent experience with housing insecurity. It is more similar to those with lower rather than higher household incomes. About 17 percent of households in the middle were cost-burdened in 2014 by HUD’s definition. This was up from 15 percent back in 2010 before the local economic boom.

The last time people treaded water and fell behind in large numbers, the nation’s politics produced the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. “I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished,” FDR observed in 1937 at his second inaugural nearly nine years after the stock market crash.

His response to our longest lingering depression asserted, “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

That was a lesson for our time.

[Table of Contents](#)

Different Kind of Segregation Occurring

Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones

October 6, 2016

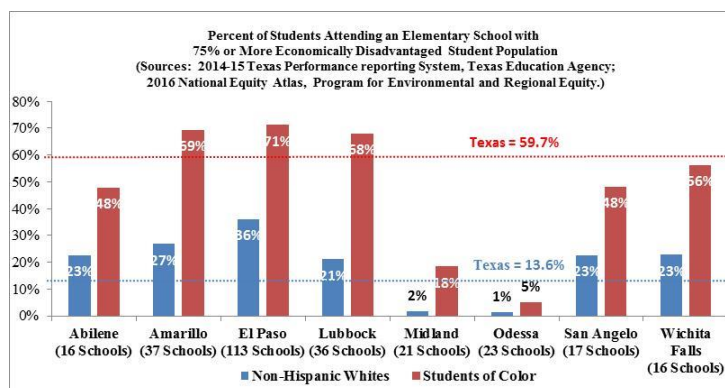
San Angelo's State Representative Drew Darby, speaking at the last Chamber of Commerce luncheon, said one of his priorities for the upcoming legislature is to provide more funding for public education. Recently, a separate analysis of national data by the University of Southern California's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) shows an emerging form of segregation of students of color in the nation's public schools.

Reported in PERE's National Equity Atlas, the emerging pattern is strongest at the primary school level. Texas joins Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia as the four states leading the pack toward school segregation. The PERE data shows 59.7 percent of Texas elementary students of color attend schools where at least 75 percent of their peers live in poor or low-income households. Only 13.6 percent of non-Hispanic white students go to such schools.

The PERE study also shows wide variation across the ten most populous Texas metropolitan areas. Only 32.5 percent of minority elementary students in the Killeen – Temple - Fort Hood metro area attend schools with high levels of economically disadvantaged enrollment. The number is 90.1 percent in Brownsville – Harlingen.

El Paso is the only West Texas urban area included in the PERE study because it covered only the 100 largest US metro areas. We retrieved data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to extend the analysis to Abilene, Amarillo, Lubbock, Midland, Odessa, San Angelo, and Wichita Falls, in addition to El Paso.

Figure 99: Percent of Students Attending Elementary School with Disadvantaged Students



The data cover enrollments in 279 public elementary schools serving the eight core cities of West Texas during the 2014-15 school year. Our statistical results match the PERE study to reveal elementary school segregation in West Texas cities. The results are eye opening.

Amarillo, El Paso, and Lubbock are the largest West Texas cities. Students of color in these cities are heavily concentrated into elementary schools with 75 percent or more enrollment from low-income families. Between 68 and 71 percent of minority students go to such schools, while

Pathways to Progress

non-Hispanic white students attend similar schools at rates ranging from 21 percent (Lubbock) to 36 percent (El Paso). The differences between whites and students of color mirror the statewide numbers from the PERE study.

Midland and Odessa provide a contrast. Booming oil-based economies in these cities have reduced household poverty to low levels. Midland's poverty rate among elementary school aged kids is just eight percent; Odessa's is 15 percent. Segregation based on income is limited in high-flying cities like these as long their booming economies are able to float the lowest families to incomes above the poverty level.

San Angelo, Abilene, and Wichita Falls are cities demonstrating moderate segregation in elementary schools. San Angelo's 48 percent of minority students attending low-income schools is well below the statewide mark. It combines with 23 percent of non-Hispanic whites attending the same schools, which is slightly above the statewide number.

At first blush, uncovering these facts about segregation in West Texas, we wondered what could be going on in schools to cause such a divisive trend. A closer look taught us that public school districts across the region make substantive efforts within their resource limits to work toward integration of students across income levels.

San Angelo ISD's decision to locate a magnet school for elementary level gifted and talented students in the predominantly low-income Fort Concho neighborhood is a particularly effective example of mitigating the potentials for income-based segregation in the district. Today, according to TEA data, economically disadvantaged students comprise 49 percent of Fort Concho School enrollment. Non-Hispanic whites comprise 44 percent of students, 56 percent are students of color, and 38 percent of all students in the school participate in the gifted and talented education program.

The Census Bureau recently touched on something that helps understand community forces that encourage school segregation in places like San Angelo. According to the Bureau, the most recent national income and poverty estimates indicate a 5.2 percent year-over-year growth in median household income. The number was widely reported as big news because it was the first increase since 2007, just before the so-called "great recession."

The Bureau announcement of the number of people living in poverty made more big news. That number fell by 3.5 million, lowering the official national poverty rate to 13.5 percent, its lowest level since 2008.

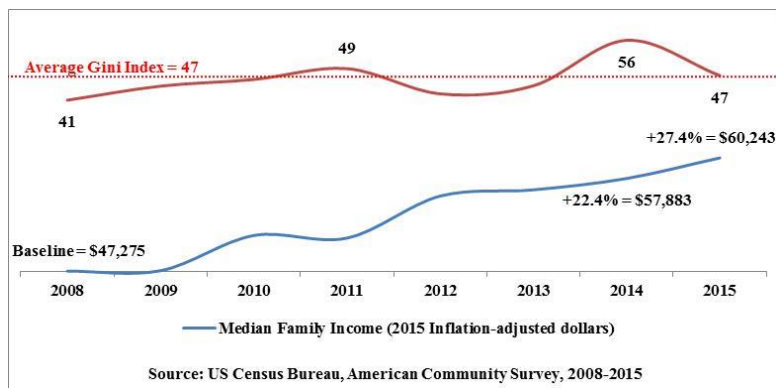
The same Census dataset shows families in San Angelo matched the nationwide five percent income increases by reaching a \$60,243 median level. That number is also 27 percent higher than the \$47,275 median income for local families at the start of the "great recession" back in 2008. Local income gains are impressive compared to the country as a whole. However, there is a spoiler in the San Angelo story.

Unlike the big news for the nation, the poverty rate did not fall in the local community. In fact, it increased by 1.3 percent from 16.1 in 2014 to 17.4 percent in 2015. Poverty among local elementary school aged children is actually higher at 19.3 percent, and a gap of about 10 points separates the 11 percent rate of non-Hispanic white kids from higher poverty levels among Latinos and other children of color.

Pathways to Progress

One of the telltale signs of rising income inequality in a community is when median income growth combines with stagnant or increasing poverty. Furthermore, the Gini Index, the economists' most commonly used metric for household income inequality, confirms the trend in San Angelo.

Figure 100: GINI Index for San Angelo



The Gini Index represents degrees of inequality on a 0 to 100 point scale with lower scores indicating greater equality; higher scores showing more inequality. The Census Bureau's set of annual measures peg San Angelo's Gini Index in 2008 at 41, well below the national score of 47 for that year.

With our own oil boom recovery, however, the local Gini Index climbed to 49 by 2011, spiked at 56 in 2014, and then landed at 47 for 2015. Overall, household income inequality increased by six points on the Gini scale between 2008 and 2015. Over the same years, the Index for both Texas and the nation increased by only one point from 47 to 48.

People are inclined to see these community trends as outcomes of entirely understandable and natural things like the efforts of parents to invest in the best possible education for their children. Nevertheless, there are at least two reasons why it is perilous for community leaders to neglect systemic trends like increasing income inequality and emerging school segregation in places like San Angelo.

First are pure demographics. Today, 52 percent of all students enrolled in Texas schools are Hispanic children, and other students of color make up another 19 percent. Latinos drive 59 percent of San Angelo ISD's enrollment, and another seven percent are other minority students. A majority of San Angelo's total population will soon consist up of Latinos and other people of color. Texas is already a so-called minority-majority state.

The second reason is a growing body of research showing segregation of students into predominantly low-income schools, which leads to many negative effects. Students face scarce resources, long-lasting school achievement problems, failing health, serious skill mismatches while struggling to enter the labor force, and a vicious cycle of increasing public resentment and resistance toward policies to address the problems of low-income schools.

The Honorable Mr. Darby's commitment to provide more funding for public education is encouraging. We hope his colleagues will share his colleagues. We even dare to hope that efforts

Pathways to Progress

to keep public school funding up to speed will turn into a state government priority lasting well beyond a single session in the series of biennial legislative meetings.

That kind of commitment is necessary if Texas finally makes good on the promise of education for all its children. Moreover, the future of San Angelo and Texas depends on it.

[Table of Contents](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

Barker, Jessica was a student intern at Community Development Initiatives and co-editor of *Pathways to Progress*.

Baugh, Mimi was the director of the CareGiver Research Institute and co-author of *Ounces of Prevention* with Kenneth L. Stewart.

Benavides, Justin was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. He contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Boggs, Jennifer was a co-author of *Contributions of Immigrants Must Not Be Ignored* with Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones.

Bridgeman, Meghann was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Brown, Andria was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Camarillo, Alma was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Cantu, Cera was an AmeriCorps VISTA for *The Survey of Health and Behavioral Health Needs of the Poor & Extremely Poor in West Texas*. She is a co-author of *Quality of Life*.

Chavarria, Andrea was a graduate research assistant at ASU Community Development Initiatives. She contributed to the following articles: *Saying NO to Citizen Complacency*, *No Reason for Complacency*, *Grading our Schools*, and *Different Kind of Segregation Occurring*.

Chavez, Ismael was a student research assistant at ASU Community Development Initiatives. He contributed to *Not All Seniors Equal*.

Cisneros, Makayla was a student research assistant at ASU Community Development initiatives. She co-authored *The Well-Being of Children in Tom Green County* with Kenneth L. Stewart and Laurence F. Jones.

Conditt, Becky was director of West Texas AHEC. She contributed to *West Texas' Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care*.

Cowan, Jack is editorial coordinator of the *San Angelo Standard Times*.

Coty, Jacqueline was a student assistant at Community Development Initiatives. She contributed to *Area Public Transportation Must Prepare for Future Needs*.

Daha, Cameron was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. He contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Pathways to Progress

Daye, Douglas was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. He contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Felton, Chris was a West Texas AHEC staff member. He contributed to *West Texas' Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care*.

Fischer, Symphony was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Goodman, Jeffrey was an undergraduate research assistant at Community Development Initiatives who co-authored *How Are the Children* with Michelle Hamby and Kenneth L. Stewart.

Gregg, Erin was the Concho Valley AHEC coordinator and co-author of *West Texas' Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care*.

Gutierrez, Amy was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Hamilton, Monte Mage was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Hanby, Michelle was a research director at Community Development Initiatives and co-author of *How Are the Children*.

Howard, Patrick was the Director of Development Services for the City of San Angelo. He contributed to *Seeing a Pattern Here*.

Hull, Whitney was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Hullum, Kayla was a student assistant at Community Development Initiatives. She contributed to *Area Public Transportation Must Prepare for Future Needs*.

Jackson, Renee was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Jang, Hyeun was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Joshua, Feleseya was a student assistant at Community Development Initiatives. She contributed to *Area Public Transportation Must Prepare for Future Needs*.

Kelly, Michael is editor of the *San Angelo Standard Times*

Lisewsky, Rachael was a graduate research assistant at ASU's Community Development

Pathways to Progress

Initiatives. She contributed to *Disconnected Youth*.

Martin, Kristopher was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. He contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

McDowell, Michael was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

McLane, Susan was a graduate research assistant & project director for *The Survey of Health and Behavioral Health Needs of the Poor & Extremely Poor in West Texas*. She co-authored *Avoiding Complacency; Quality of Life; They worked, now it's Up to Us; Door to Reform; Children Are All of Our Future; GI Bill: A Success*.

Moore, Raechel was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Retana, Antonia was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Rudd, Darryl was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. He contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Schneebeli, Aundrea was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Teague, Melanie was a West Texas AHEC staff member. She contributed to *West Texas' Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care*.

Tidwell, Tyler N. was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. He contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Vela, Briana was a West Texas AHEC staff member. She contributed to *West Texas' Wide Open Spaces a Challenge for Health Care*.

Wu, Amanda was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

Wylie, Caitlin was a member of the Angelo State University Women's Health Index research team. She contributed to the *Door to Reform*.

[Table of Contents](#)